



North Devon Council

Report Date: Monday, 5 August 2024

Topic: Devon Housing Commission Report

Report by: Ken Miles, Chief Executive

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Devon Housing Commission was created following discussions between Devon local authorities at the Devon Housing Task Force.
- 1.2. Its report has just been published and is now presented to Committee for noting and consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. To note the Report of the Devon Housing Commission and to resolve to write to the Commission to thank them for their diligence and efforts.
- 2.2. To note the recommendations and to consider these when discussing and formulating the North Devon Housing Strategy
- 2.3. To consider making representations to the local MP and to government on any of the recommendations eg registration of short term holiday lets.
- 2.4. To support the wider monitoring of recommendations through the Combined County Authority and/or Northern Devon Futures or other group.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure that appropriate steps are taken to implement the recommendations of the report

4. REPORT

- 4.1. The Devon Housing Commission is chaired by Lord Best, who has a substantial background in housing matters. The commissioners were drawn from politicians, landlords, housing providers and local authorities and were supported by University of Exeter and the Devon Housing Task Force. The Lead Member for Housing represents North Devon Council on the Task Force and the Lead Devon CEX has been Stephen Walford from MDDC, supported by the CEX at North Devon Council.
- 4.2. The Commission gathered evidence from many sources and visited various parts of the county, including North Devon where they saw housing issues in Ilfracombe, the impacts of second homes and short term holiday lets and proposed Community Land Trust sites.
- 4.3. The report was launched on 19th July and so officers are still considering its content but it is clear that it presents a very accurate and clear summary of the very challenging housing position in Devon
- 4.4. Members will note that the report is split into relevant chapters:
 1. Lack of Affordable Housing

2. Rural and Coastal Communities,
 3. Cities and Coastal Towns,
 4. Devon's Demography,
 5. Supported Housing and Temporary Accommodation,
 6. Healthy and Environmentally sustainable Housing,
 7. Housing Need and Delivery,
 8. Planning, and
 9. The role of the CCA
- 4.5. Whilst all of the report is relevant to the North Devon area, the particular housing issues in Ilfracombe are referred to in section 3.4. Within this section reference is made to direct intervention in the market and enhanced regulatory activity by local authorities to try to deal with poor quality HMOs etc. Members may recall that the bid for exceptional Levelling Up funding was based on a plan to intervene in that way.
- 4.6. A further section to note is 2.3 where data from North Devon Council showing some wards with over 20% holiday lets is quoted and that data is set out in full in Annexe One. Annexe Two, focussing on South Hams, shows a direct correlation between the increase in holiday lets and the drop in population in the same areas and describes those areas as being "hollowed out" with a local school closing as a result. That situation is equally relevant to some of the parishes in North Devon.
- 4.7. Some of the data set out in the report is particularly challenging. It shows that house prices have increased in North Devon by 429% since 1997 yet median income has only grown by 134% over the same period. The data also shows that someone renting a property in North Devon is likely to be spending 30% of their income on rent.
- 4.8. Figures 4.5 and 4.6 show the extent of population growth in North Devon and how this is made up substantially by middle aged residents, Figure 4.6 also shows how external migration from the area is mainly in the 15-19 year range. Together these figures show how the population in Devon is ageing.
- 4.9. The Report makes a number of recommendations and splits these between general recommendations, recommendations to local authorities, to government, to Homes England, to the new CCA and to other bodies.
- 4.10. Officers are currently going through those recommendations but it is clear from an initial viewing that North Devon Council is already carrying out many of them. As an example, the Report recommends that councils take opportunities to purchase and modernise existing properties in order to use as temporary accommodation. North Devon Council has purchased 16 properties for this purpose over the past few years. The council has also resolved to increase council tax on second homes and have indicated that it would endeavour to use that additional funding for housing purposes
- 4.11. Officers will continue to study the report and it is likely that recommendations from the report will feed into the forthcoming high level



Housing Strategy that is in the course of preparation and due to be presented to Members in the autumn.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1. There are none arising from the consideration of this report

6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. There are no equality implications arising from consideration of the Report. Implementation of some of the recommendations may have implications but these will be dealt with as they arise.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1. There are no environmental implications from consideration of this report.

8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1. What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:

- 8.1.1. The commercialisation agenda:
- 8.1.2. Improving customer focus and/or
- 8.1.3. Regeneration or economic development

The Report has important implications for many of the corporate priorities, including housing as well as those listed above. The recommendations from the report need to be considered when introducing important strategic documents such as the Housing Strategy and the Local Plan

9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The decision in respect of the recommendations in this report can be made by this Committee pursuant to delegated powers provided in Part 3 Annexe 1

10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

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

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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).

The Report of the Devon Housing Commission

12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Lead Member for Housing, Head of PMO (Housing and EH),



Housing Manager, Director of Resources and Deputy CEX, ,Head of Place, Property and Regeneration