

## **Housing Emergency Motion**

New research “**The economic impact of building social housing**” carried out by CEBR on behalf of Shelter and the National Housing Federation (NHF), is the first to show the massive economic and social benefits of building 90,000 new social rented homes – the figure that needs to be built each year to fix the housing crisis and help end homelessness.

The report demonstrates that building 90,000 social homes provides both immediate and long-term value for money for the government and the economy. It would directly support nearly 140,000 jobs in the first year alone. Within three years, the wider economic benefits of building the homes would break even and return an impressive £37.8bn back to the economy, largely by boosting the construction industry.

Alongside this, the new social homes would generate huge savings for the taxpayer across multiple departments. These breakdown as follows:

- £4.5bn savings on housing benefit
- £2.5bn income from construction taxes
- £3.8bn income from employment taxes
- £5.2bn savings to the NHS
- £4.5bn savings from reduction in homelessness
- £3.3bn savings to Universal Credit

This report demonstrates that there are tangible solutions, that the government are just not choosing to take and locally we are left holding the problem.

Despite the housing growth in the area, the delivery of affordable rented properties falls far short from demand, It has become increasingly challenging to secure Registered Providers (RPs) on schemes with low numbers of s106 affordable homes, however the introduction of First Homes as part of the [s106] affordable housing contribution has been catastrophic and severely reduced the number of affordable/social rented and shared ownership homes available to RPs. There is an increasing number of affordable homes being left dormant on approved sites across the borough - currently in Swale there are just under 500 affordable homes secured on s106 sites but with no RP to contract and deliver these much-needed homes. Despite working in effective partnership with RPs, including applying strategic partnership funding to provide additional affordable homes on land-led schemes, more innovation is required to enable smaller RPs to utilise available Homes England affordable housing grant to start to deliver homes in areas where viability is 'blocking' delivering but where homelessness and poverty are acute.

At the Housing and Health Committee on 5th March, the committee scrutinised the current spend on Temporary Accommodation and the current controls that are in place. The committee strongly feels that this situation is unsustainable and continues to represent an existential threat to local government. Whilst the Council's teams will continue to do everything in its powers to meet both the needs of its residents and its statutory obligations, the system was not created to deal with these numbers. The driving forces underpinning this are systemic and structural and are

not in the Council's control. Under current funding arrangements the Council does not have the resources to solve the problem alone.

Over the 2023/24 financial year, this has resulted in:

- Increasingly ordinary working families being priced out of the housing market through no fault of their own;
- Today almost everyone knowing someone who is struggling to access housing of their choice; and
- The Council's total net spend on TA in 2023/24 forecast to be circa £4.5m, up from £2m just three years ago, with scores of local authorities across the country similarly affected.
- 306 households living in Temporary Accommodation, 2/3rds of these have children.
- 1,684 households that are on the Housing Register

As such, this Council resolves to:

1. Declare an Affordable Housing Emergency for the Borough of Swale.
2. Recognise and endorse the work of the Leader of the Council in working with District Council's Network in highlighting and tackling this issue.
3. Continue to work with the sector and try and engage Government to develop long term solutions to fix the national housing crisis.
4. Call on the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Housing Minister to urgently seek proper solutions to this crisis.

Proposed by: Councillor Angela Harrison

Seconded by: Councillor Alastair Gould