

To the Cabinet Member for Planning and Development and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Protection

Affordable Housing

A suggestion was made that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should look at the question of the provision of affordable housing in a task and finish group. The suggestion was made before the report to Cabinet of 23rd November 2017 had been seen by the member who made it.

The Committee agreed that the report was a very comprehensive and useful document, in that it thoroughly discussed all the various options and issues surrounding affordable housing in its various forms, that is rented and shared ownership options. It was agreed by the Committee that there was little point in setting up a task and finish group to look into the question when quite clearly the Cabinet member for Housing and Public Protection and her team were continuing to explore a number of options including that of the creation of a separate housing company.

Having decided that, the Committee will not take a key issue any further, it was noted that nowhere in the document was the option of low-cost housing to buy mentioned.

It was noted out that some councils have been engaged in the provision of modest housing development to be sold at such a price that buyers could afford on a relatively modest salary.

The suggestion is therefore made and that the relevant Cabinet Members and their officers add to their work programs the development of modestly priced housing in an effort to get more people, at least those who wish it, started on the housing ladder and fulfilling the apparent national objective of Owning Your Own Home.

Councillor David Coldwell
Vice Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny
Monday 11th December 2017

Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Protection

Affordable Housing

Thank you for the email that you sent on behalf of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC). I am glad that the OSC considered that the Cabinet report on affordable housing was useful and comprehensive. As the report noted, for the period 2010 - 2016 we made some good progress delivering over 1110 new affordable rented and shared ownership homes across the district. It is also the case that increasing the supply of affordable homes, and in particular homes that people in need can afford, remains a priority and a key part of the Council's housing strategy.

I note that the OSC has identified that some councils are investing in affordable housing for sale with the aim of helping people on to the housing ladder. It has also requested that this be picked up as part of our work on affordable housing. I think this is a good idea and feel that fits nicely with the next steps we set out in the Cabinet report. The report identified three options that we want to explore to deliver new affordable homes and make the best use of committed sums. These were: continuing to work with our Registered Provider partners, delivering more temporary accommodation and exploring the creation of a housing company. If we take the final option as an example, some councils have used this model to

provide affordable tenures such as shared equity or shared ownership and therefore meet the very need identified by the OSC. As a result I will make certain it is considered as part of the next phase of work on affordable housing as we want to explore as many options as possible.

I hope the OSC finds this response constructive and would encourage members to follow our work on affordable housing and to let me know if they would like to attend future meetings of the Housing & Public Protection Policy Development Advisory Group to see how it progresses.

Councillor Kate Rowbottom
Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Protection
9th January 2018