



### **Motion on Notice from Councillor Rebecca Cooper**

In light of Worthing's increasing problems with affordable housing provision, this motion asks the Council to send the following letter to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government:

To the Right Hon Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Worthing Borough Council is concerned about the impact viability assessments and vacant building credits are having on its ability to deliver its affordable housing strategy. It calls on the Secretary of State to take action on these two issues to ensure that the Council is able to meet its obligations to meet the urgent need for affordable housing in the Worthing area.

Viability has always played a prominent part in the development process and is a crucial part of the dialogue between planners and developers to ensure that both developers and the community get a fair deal out of any proposed development scheme. However, the introduction of a crucial clause in the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 stating that plans "should not be subject to such a scale of obligations and policy burdens that their ability to be developed viably is threatened" **is too broadly defined and unfairly reduces the ability of the Council to secure contributions towards affordable housing** in line with Worthing Borough Council's 2011 Core Strategy .

The problem is exacerbated by the confidential nature of viability assessments which prevent the public and press from scrutinising the figures and coming to an informed view of the validity of substantial reductions in affordable housing contributions being offered by developers. There seems little justification for this excessive confidentiality and it is contrary to the Government's commitment to open Local Government.

Vacant Building Credit, announced by the DCLG in 2014, has added to the problems of securing Section 106 Affordable housing contributions on brownfield redevelopment plans. We understand the desirability of bringing buildings back into use that might otherwise remain undeveloped, but the lack of a clear definition as to when a building can be considered 'vacant', 'unused', 'abandoned' or 'empty' **has created a loophole that is not always consistent with the purpose of the guidance** and left urban Council areas such as Worthing with limited grounds on which to defend its commitment to make provision for affordable housing.

We call on the Secretary of state to consider the implications of these two issues and to provide new guidance for Councils and developers that will address our concerns and enable us to meet our affordable housing requirements for the benefit of our residents and the country as a whole.

Proposed by: Cllr Rebecca Cooper

Seconded by: Cllr Paul Yallop

## **Local Government Act 1972**

Background papers

Email exchange 20 and 21 October and 17 November between the Director for Communities and Councillor Cooper



**Motion on Notice from Councillor Hazel Thorpe**

*'Council to request the Director for Communities to place on the Joint Strategic Committee agenda a feasibility report on an Ethical Landlord Scheme'*

Proposed by: Cllr Hazel Thorpe

Seconded by: Cllr James Doyle

Due to factors beyond its control, the issue of homelessness, lack of affordable housing in general and consequently the increased need for temporary accommodation exists.

- The purpose of this motion is to enhance and extend the provision already in place in Worthing and Adur for the benefit of the public through using the good practice and ideas around the country highlighted in the \*background paper
- It is well documented that homelessness and eviction has an associated stigma with possible criminalisation of tenants, a drop in educational standards and mental health implications. Therefore minimising this problem can only benefit members of the public and also the Councils in terms of reputation and financial sustainability.
- The introduction of Universal Credit is highly likely to exacerbate the amount of residents requiring housing assistance – so, as a Council, we need to find ways of minimising the impact and symptoms of the issues as well as financing a temporary cure.

**Local Government Act 1972**

Background papers

Decent Private Sector Homes - Ethical Landlord Scheme - Reducing Homelessness in Worthing and Adur District.