

Subject:	Prioritise & Support Community Led Affordable Housing over Private Developers in the City - Items referred from the Special Council meeting held on the 13 August 2020		
Date of Meeting:	24 September 2020		
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law		
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Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To receive the following petition for consideration which was debated at and referred from the Special Council meeting held on the 13 August 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) That the petition is noted;
- (2) That the Council recognise and welcome the role of community-led housing projects in creating neighbourhoods while at the same time addressing the city's housing shortage in a manner that focuses on the quality of the build, affordability, social value, sustainability, conservation and enhancement of the natural environment; and
- (3) That the Council continue to explore borrowing from the PWLB and on-lending to community-led housing projects as a matter of urgency as a way of supporting such community-led efforts.

3. CONTEXT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The petition is detailed below:

PRIORITISE & SUPPORT COMMUNITY LED AFFORDABLE HOUSING OVER PRIVATE DEVELOPERS IN THE CITY

- 3.1.1 We the undersigned petition Brighton & Hove Council to prioritise community led housing over profit-led private developers when making council and brownfield land identified in the City Plan available for new homes in the city. We also call on them to explore how to make land financially viable for community self-build so that the homes created on it can be truly affordable for local people for ever.

Lead Petitioner – Andrea Jones

Additional Information:

3.1.2 Brighton is in the middle of a deepening housing crisis. The city has the second largest rough-sleeping population in the country, one of the highest housing waiting lists and the second highest house prices in the UK. There are also thousands of families and key workers trapped in unsustainable housing situations because of the disastrous disconnect between average wages and average house prices alongside paying astronomical rents or being stuck with mortgages they can never pay off.

Unlike private developments evidence from across the country shows that community-led housing:

- 1) Creates truly affordable housing that STAYS AFFORDABLE
- 2) Reduces the need for social care in older people by creating SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES
- 3) Are built to the HIGHEST ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL standards
- 4) REDUCE POLLUTION and congestion
- 5) Create truly COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES with beneficial infrastructure for neighbouring communities and provide a BOOST TO THEIR LOCAL ECONOMIES.

We recognise that land is at a premium in our small city as well as the huge challenges that local authorities face in delivering services to greater numbers of people with ever reducing budgets. However, we would argue that selling land to the highest bidder (generally private developers and corporations) is a false economy and does little to address the housing crisis. Private developers often prioritise profit over the needs of local communities, don't build to the highest environmental standards and rarely deliver on their affordable housing targets. Large developments where the majority of the homes are for sale at full market value feed high house prices and drive out young people, families and key workers who can no longer afford to live in their home city.

With a thriving community led housing sector in Brighton, national grants available, and a public mood which wants to see fast action on housing and the environment; there has never been a better time for the city council to take a bold and powerful step to show its commitment to community led housing and have this innovation shared across the country and celebrated by its residents.

We acknowledge the good work already done by the council to support Community Led Housing but passionately believe that one of the most significant solutions to our city's housing crisis is supporting and resourcing local people to build their own homes and communities. If spare land is always sold to the highest bidder at the highest price, we are selling out the people of our wonderful city to private business and their profit margins.

Further reading and research:

Benefits of cohousing Report September 2019, Bridport group/project, Dorset
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/geography-and-environment/research/lse-london/documents/Reports/Bridport-cohousing-report.pdf>

Labour case for community led housing: http://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/12081_19-Land-for-the-Many.pdf

High environmental standards etc: <http://www.grcc.org.uk/affordable-housing/community-led-housing-benefits>

Who benefits from CLH? <http://clhtoolkit.org/housing/who-benefits-community-led-housing-schemes>

Evidence on benefits from Wikipedia including links to research:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community-led_housing

2017 speech from then housing minister Housing Minister Alok Sharma's to the Community-Led Housing Conference <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/community-led-housing>

The economic case for CLH against selling land to private developers:

<https://neweconomics.org/2018/05/making-the-case/>

<https://neweconomics.org/2018/05/making-the-case-5>

Benefits research:

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=2ahUKEwjEue3akZnjAhUyt3EKHXNXDfsQFjAJegQIBxAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Flocality.org.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2018%2F03%2FLocality_Small-Scale-Community-led-Housing.pdf&usq=AOvVaw3l4Oe8onnFgVxv699GwilK

Building and Social Housing Foundation now World Habitat – source

- 3.2 An extract from the minutes of the special council meeting held on the 13 August 2020 is detailed below setting out the petition and recommendations for the committee to consider:

SPECIAL COUNCIL

4.30pm 13 AUGUST 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING - SKYPE

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Robins (Chair), Mears (Deputy Chair), Allcock, Appich, Atkinson, Bagaeen, Barnett, Brennan, Childs, Clare, Deane, DrUITT, Evans, Fishleigh, Fowler, Gibson, Hamilton, Heley, Hill, Hills, Hugh-Jones, Janio, Knight, Lewry, Littman, Lloyd, Mac Cafferty, McNair, Miller, Moonan, Nemeth, Nield, O'Quinn, Osborne, Peltzer Dunn, Phillips, Pissaridou, Platts, Powell, Shanks, C Theobald, Wares, West, Wilkinson and Williams

PART ONE

32 PETITIONS FOR DEBATE.

(1) PRIORITISE & SUPPORT COMMUNITY LED AFFORDABLE HOUSING OVER PRIVATE DEVELOPERS IN THE CITY

32.1 The Mayor stated that where a petition secured 1,250 or more signatures it could be debated at the council meeting. He had been made aware of six such petitions and would take each in turn, although those relating to Madeira Drive and Old Shoreham Road would be taken in one debate as there were petitions in favour and against the proposals.

32.2 He noted that there were amendments to the cover reports' recommendations for the first petition, the second and third petitions which would be taken as part of the debate on the matter in question.

- 32.3 The Mayor then invited Ms. Corina Edwards-Colledge to present the petition concerning the prioritisation of affordable housing in the city.
- 32.4 Ms. Edwards-Colledge thanked the Mayor and stated that the petition which had been signed by 1,351 people called on the Council to recognise the need to prioritise community-led housing over private developments. She stated that a thriving community-led housing sector would address many of the issues faced by people who wanted to secure an affordable home and would support the key aims of the city plan. She believed it would create supportive and secure communities with housing that met the highest environmental standards and support the growth of local communities. The hope was that the City Council would deliver on providing sites for truly affordable housing, access to funding through the public works loans board and to ensure that land prices are affordable. She hoped that a collaborative relationship with local Housing Groups could be developed so that strategic housing provision could become a reality.
- 32.5 Councillor Hugh-Jones thanked Ms. Edwards-Colledge for presenting the petition and stated that the Administration fully supported its aims. She noted that the community land trust focussed on building for the community and placed an emphasis on affordability. The key point being that the land was held in trust so that prices remained affordable for future buyers. It did allow for units to be sold to finance other building and developments could be of a mixed tenure although the aim would be that the majority of properties would be for rent. The difficulty for local authorities was managing the right to buy scheme which has its complexities and means the council is having to try to constantly catch-up to maintain its housing stock. There was a clear need to work with community led schemes to maximise housing availability at an affordable cost for those in need. Hence the amendment that she wished to move on behalf of the Green Group.
- 32.6 Councillor Gibson formally seconded the amendment and reserved his right to speak in the debate.
- 32.7 Councillor Appich welcomed the petition and stated that the planning policies set out in the City Plan parts 1 and 2 were strongly supportive of community-led housing. She noted that officers and councillors were working to find ways to support local schemes and enable access to funding streams and hoped that this would be progressed. She also expressed concern on the impact of the proposed changes to the planning process could have on the availability of affordable housing in the city.
- 32.8 Councillor Mears welcomed the petition and the Green Group amendment and stated that housing was an important issue for the city and the availability of suitable housing for everyone needed to be addressed. There was a need for a mixture of provision, and she acknowledged that community-led schemes were an important element in developing communities and ensuring that affordable housing was available in the city.
- 32.9 Councillor Janio questioned the approach and suggested that the provision of housing should be left to the private sector and the free market rather than the council selling assets to a particular group at a discount which would then

disadvantage another group. He could not support the petition or the amendment.

32.10 Councillor Gibson noted the comments and suggested that the current housing crisis had resulted from the failure of the free market to ensure that there was sufficient availability at an affordable rate. He believed the petition and the support of the council for a community land trust was an opportunity to begin to tackle the crisis and he welcomed the cross-party support for the amendment.

32.11 The Mayor thanked Ms. Edwards-Colledge for joining the meeting and presenting the petition and noted that the amendment had been accepted.

32.12 The Mayor then put the recommendations as amended to the vote and called on each of the Group Leaders to confirm their position as well as the Groups in turn and each of the Independent Members:

Councillor Mac Cafferty stated that the Green Group were in favour of the recommendations as amended and this was confirmed by the Green Group Members;

Councillor Platts stated that the Labour Group were in favour of the recommendations as amended and this was confirmed by the Labour Group Members;

Councillor Wares stated that the Conservative were in favour of the recommendations as amended and this was confirmed by the Conservative Group Members;

Councillor Brennan confirmed that she was in favour of the recommendations as amended;

Councillor Fishleigh confirmed that she was in favour of the recommendations as amended;

Councillor Janio confirmed that he was against the recommendations as amended;

Councillor Knight confirmed that she was in favour of the recommendations as amended.

32.13 The Mayor confirmed that the recommendations as amended had been carried.

32.14 **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the petition be noted and referred to the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee for consideration;
- (2) That the Council recognise and welcome the role of community-led housing projects in creating neighbourhoods while at the same time addressing the city's housing shortage in a manner that focuses on the quality of the build, affordability, social value, sustainability, conservation and enhancement of the natural environment; and

- (3) That the Council continue to explore borrowing from the PWLB and on-lending to community-led housing projects as a matter of urgency as a way of supporting such community-led efforts.