

By: Mr Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Economic Development

To: County Council – 16 July 2020

Subject: **SELECT COMMITTEE: AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Summary: To comment on and endorse the report of the Select Committee on Affordable Housing.

1. Introduction

The review was proposed by Mrs Trudy Dean, and was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee on 26th July 2019. The Select Committee commenced its work in November 2019.

2. Select Committee Process

2.1. Membership

The Chairman of the Select Committee was Mr Robert Thomas. Other members of the Committee were: Mrs Pauline Beresford, Mr Trevor Bond, Mr David Brazier, Mr Paul Cooper, Mrs Trudy Dean, Mr Dara Farrell, Ms Sarah Hamilton and Mr Derek Murphy.

2.2. Terms of Reference

The final terms of reference, agreed by the Select Committee on 17th December 2019, were:

- a) To define and put into context affordable housing.
- b) To explore KCC's current role in supporting the development of new affordable housing in Kent.
- c) To consider additional ways in which KCC can support the development of affordable housing in Kent.

2.3. Evidence

The Affordable Housing Select Committee held 16 formal hearing sessions with a wide range of witnesses, including representatives of Essex County Council, Homes England and Kent district councils, as well as academics, local organisations, the KCC Cabinet Member for Economic Development and senior officers.

The Committee also received written evidence from a number of sources, including seven Kent district councils, several Kent parish councils, the Chartered Institute of Housing, Porchlight, RentPlus and Action with Communities in Rural Kent.

3. Report

The Select Committee approved its report at a formal meeting on 25 June 2020. A copy of the report's Executive Summary and its recommendations is attached in Appendix 1.

A copy of the full report is available online. Please follow the link below.

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/110339/Affordable-Housing-Select-Committee-report.pdf

4. Comments from CMM

Due to the timing of the approved report on the Affordable Housing Select Committee, this was unable to be discussed at Cabinet prior to County Council. Cabinet Members have reviewed the report and would like to thank the Select Committee, chaired by Robert Thomas, along with those that contributed to the robust report and recommendations.

The Executive recognises the importance of providing Affordable Housing that is of quality, in the right locations and importantly has the infrastructure to support residents have a good quality of life. However, the Council must be mindful that this is led by District and Borough Council partners and that the key role KCC can play is strategic and one of facilitation.

Given that the landscape has changed dramatically due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, County Council will be required to discuss the report and potential recommendations and pragmatically consider the potential deliverability given the current financial challenge the authority is facing, and how best existing KCC functions can be aligned internally and without additional cost to support Kent Districts to deliver planned housing growth.

5. Monitoring of Recommendations

In accordance with the process for monitoring Select Committee recommendations, as set out in the Constitution (Section 17.105), an action plan from the Cabinet Member/Corporate Director will be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in autumn 2020 for consideration. Any such action plan or formal decision(s) needed in order to implement the Select Committee recommendations must comply with all of the necessary requirements for making executive decisions. These include compliance with all legal obligations, the Public Sector Equality duty and consultation where necessary.

6. Conclusion

We would like to congratulate the Select Committee on completing this challenging piece of work. We would also like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the Select Committee.

7. Recommendations

We recommend that:-

- (a) the Select Committee report be endorsed by the County Council;
- (b) the Select Committee be thanked for a useful report on a complex and challenging issue; and
- (c) the witnesses and others who provided evidence and made valuable contributions to the work of the Select Committee be thanked.

Background Information: *None*