

Full Council

21 FEBRUARY 2024

NOTICE OF MOTION 1 – DECLARING A HOUSING EMERGENCY

Mover Councillor Jones and Seconder Councillor Irvine

This Council recognises the growing pressures on Local Authorities relating to housing, and that Crawley is one of the worst affected areas in the country with a number of factors driving increasingly unsustainable revenue costs relating to temporary accommodation for the Council. These factors include:

- The unaffordability of home ownership for an increasing number of people
- A shrinking private rented sector with soaring rents (8% increase in the last year) that also makes this option for housing unaffordable for a growing number of people
- the shortage of council and other social housing to meet demand
- Water Neutrality planning restrictions imposed by Natural England slowing down new development

As of 6 February 2024, this has resulted in:

- 2796 applications made for the 243 housing units made available in the last 8 months, so over 11 applicants per property resulting in over 260 bids for every property
- 485 households, or 1224 people, living in temporary accommodation
- One pound in every three of the Council's net revenue budget being spent on temporary accommodation
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The Council also recognises the likelihood of a worsening situation given the presence of four Asylum Contingency hotels in the borough and the decision of the Home Office to disperse those seeking asylum directly into communities without a managed process or proper support in place.

This is despite the range of Council efforts to tackle structural pressures including, but not limited to:

- One of the best records in the country developing social housing, delivering over 1600 affordable units over the past 10 years, and continuing to bring new sites forward
- Buying additional properties such as the recent acquisition of 6-9 Ifield Road

- Retrofitting thousands of our social housing stock with water saving devices to allow us to build more homes
- Pursuing long leasing opportunities for temporary accommodation to increase supply and reduce costs
- Bidding for funding streams from multiple sources to support new affordable housing and temporary accommodation delivery
- Using over £500k of funding over the past two years to support people to stay in their accommodation and prevent them from becoming homeless

Whilst the Council's teams will continue to do everything in its powers to meet the needs of our residents and meet our statutory obligations, the system was not created to deal with these numbers. The driving forces are not in the Council's control and the Council under the current funding arrangements does not have the resources to solve the problem alone.

The Council therefore resolves to:

1. declare a Housing Emergency for the Borough of Crawley
2. request the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Housing to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities calling for additional resources to help local housing authorities and councils worst affected such as Crawley, including unfreezing the Local Housing Allowance for councils currently set at 2011 levels.
3. work with the sector and with Government to develop long term solutions to fix the national housing crisis