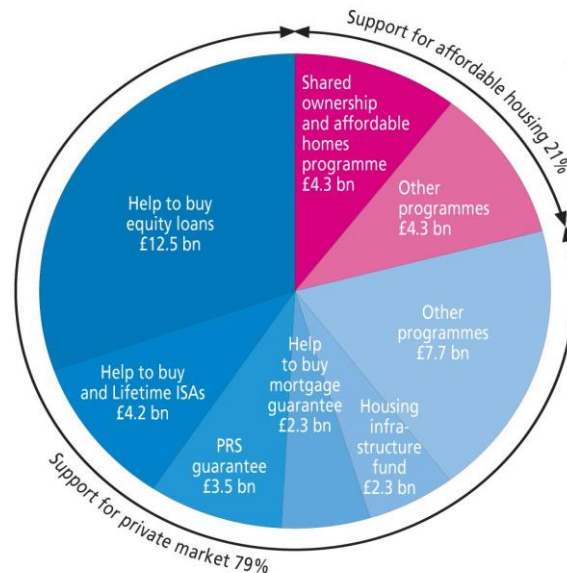


AWICS Housing News

October 2017



**Government Budgets for Housing Investment 2016-21
 as analysed by the Chartered Institute of Housing**

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Chartered Institute of Housing protests about Government Housing Budgets

Analysis of government figures by the Chartered Institute of Housing shows that budgeted government investment through to 2020/21 will funnel £32billion into private programmes and only £8billion into programmes for shared ownership and sub-market rent. The government is therefore due to spend almost 80% of its housing budget in England through to 2020/21 on private housing through programmes such as the Help to Buy.

The figures have been compiled for United Kingdom Housing Review briefing. Last year's document also showed a similar split of housing investment.

The largest investment in private housing is the £12.5 billion bill for the Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme. Help to Buy ISAs, the Help to Buy guarantee scheme, and private rented sector guarantees cash make up the remainder of the funding. This investment is in the form of loans and guaranteed debt, rather than direct government spending.

The government's investment in affordable housing comprises mainly £4.3 billion of grant under the Affordable Homes Programme.

The Chartered Institute of Housing is calling for government to shift some of its investment in housing, away from subsidising private house building and towards directly funding more new homes for those on low incomes.

Now, less than a quarter of the money the government is spending on housing is invested in building new affordable homes to rent, and very few of these will be available for social rent. There were just 1,100 new homes built for social rent in 2015/16 and the Chartered Institute of Housing is asking government to use the 2017 Autumn budget to address that.

The annual United Kingdom Housing Review briefing paper also provides detailed analysis in several other areas including:

- Overall levels of house building
- Trends in levels of homelessness across different parts of the United Kingdom
- The impact of various welfare cuts.

Terrie Alafat, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing, said that:

"We know we need to build more homes to get to grips with our national housing crisis; our United Kingdom Housing Review briefing highlights that annual supply remains at least 30,000 homes short of household growth. But it's not just about building more homes – it's about building more affordable homes for people on lower incomes. The government needs to take an urgent look at rebalancing the housing budget and investing more in genuinely affordable homes for rent."

In 2010/11 the Government contributed £2.5 billion to the Affordable Homes Programme but by 2015/16 that had fallen to just £285 million. In total, the amount of public money going to help housing associations build new homes has dropped from £3.8 billion in 2010/11 to £1.3 billion in 2015/16. The most recent data shows that the government has now completely stopped funding new social housing that is 30-40% cheaper than affordable housing.

The number of affordable homes funded by the government has fallen by 50% between 2010/11 and 2016/17 from 56,000 to 28,000, according to figures from the Department for Communities and Local Government. At the same time, the number of homes for the cheapest social rents built using government finance has collapsed, from 36,000 to just over 1,000.

This data underlines in stark form the shift that has taken place in government housing priorities and funding since 2010. The government's priority is unashamedly to resist the decline in home ownership and they do not appear to attach much significance to other housing priorities including the provision of affordable or social housing.

National Audit Office publishes report on Homelessness

In September 2017, the National Audit Office published a report that concluded that the government has a 'light touch approach' to the growing problem of homelessness. They said that, while the government required local authorities to have a homelessness strategy, it had failed to monitor these plans or progress towards meeting them.

The National Audit Office found that homelessness in England in each of its various forms has increased in recent years. The number of rough sleepers stood at more than 4,100 in the autumn of 2016, having increased from fewer than 1,800 in the autumn of 2010 – an increase of 134%. The number of homeless households in temporary accommodation has also increased, rising from fewer than 49,000 in March 2011 to around 77,000 in March 2017 (an increase of 60%). These households include over 120,000 children. The use of temporary accommodation is concentrated in London, and 70% of households in temporary accommodation are placed there by London borough councils.

In response to increasing homelessness pressures, demand for local authorities' prevention activities has also increased in recent years. The number of prevention cases increased from just under 141,000 in 2009/10 to just under 200,000 in 2016/17. Local authority assistance to prevent homelessness includes support to enable families at risk of homelessness to stay in their own homes, or to secure alternative accommodation.

The National Audit Office's key findings are as follows:

The causes and costs of homelessness:

- There are long-standing reasons why homelessness tends to be highest in certain areas.
- The ending of private sector tenancies has overtaken all other causes to become the biggest single driver of statutory homelessness in England.
- The affordability of tenancies is likely to have contributed to the increase in homelessness.
- Changes in the Local Housing Allowance are likely to have contributed to the affordability of tenancies for those on benefits and are an element of the increase in homelessness.
- Overall public expenditure on homelessness has increased in recent years.
- The government has not fully assessed the impact of its welfare reforms on homelessness.
- The government has also not evaluated how local authorities are using the funding it has introduced to mitigate the potential impact of its welfare reforms.

The response of Local Government:

- The ability of local authorities to respond to increased homelessness is constrained by the limited options they have to house homeless families.
- Local authorities have increased their spending on homelessness while simultaneously reducing spending on preventing it.
- There is significant variation in the type and cost of temporary accommodation that different local authorities use, reflecting their local housing markets.
- Nearly a third of homeless households have been placed in temporary accommodation outside the local authority where they first registered as homeless.

The role of the Department for Communities & Local Government:

- The Department's approach to working with local authorities in tackling homelessness is 'light touch'.
- The Department does not have a published cross-governmental strategy to prevent and tackle homelessness.
- The Department plans to improve the data the government holds on homelessness, and acknowledges the scale of this challenge.

- The Department has supported new legislation that will increase the responsibilities of local authorities in preventing homelessness.

The National Audit Office states that homelessness costs the government £1.1 billion a year with more than three quarters of this – £845 million – spent on temporary accommodation. Of this £845 million, the majority (£638 million) goes on housing benefit. They concluded that the government's recent performance in reducing homelessness could not be considered value for money as follows:

“Homelessness in all its forms has significantly increased in recent years, and at present costs the public sector in excess of £1 billion a year. It appears likely that the decrease in affordability of properties in the private rented sector, of which welfare reforms such as the capping of Local Housing Allowance are an element, have driven this increase in homelessness. Despite this, the government has not evaluated the impact of its welfare reforms on homelessness, or the impact of the mitigations that it has put in place.

“Although it is the government department with responsibility for tackling homelessness, during its increase in recent years the Department took a light touch approach to working with local authorities. It is difficult to understand why the Department persisted with this approach in the face of such a visibly growing problem. It is only now beginning to put in place the measures that will allow it to maximise the effectiveness of the resources it directs at homelessness. There remain gaps in its approach and it has not, for example, sought to evaluate the majority of funding provided to prevent and tackle homelessness. The Department’s recent performance in reducing homelessness therefore cannot be considered value for money.”

Amyas Morse, Head of the National Audit Office, said that:

“Homelessness in all its forms has significantly increased in recent years, driven by several factors. Despite this, government has not evaluated the impact of its reforms on this issue, and there remain gaps in its approach”

The breakdown in private sector tenancies is the single biggest driver of homelessness in England, that the National Audit Office links to stricter welfare programmes. Local authorities have seen the proportion of households accepted as homeless due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy go from 11% during 2009/10 to 32% during 2016/17. Across England, the ending of private sector tenancies accounted for 74% of the growth in households who qualify for temporary accommodation since 2009/10.

The report states that:

“Changes to local housing allowance are likely to have contributed to the affordability of tenancies for those on benefits, and are an element of the increase in homelessness.”

The National Audit Office’s recommendations are that:

- The Department should develop and publish a strategy that sets out how it will achieve its objectives relating to homelessness. This should set out the reduction in homelessness it is aiming to achieve and the contribution it expects from different programmes across government.
- The Department should work with local authorities to establish how they are making use of measures to tackle homelessness, in order to gain a full understanding of effectiveness and share best practice.
- The Department should work with local authorities to ensure that they are making the most effective use of temporary accommodation. This work should include enabling local authorities to increase their use of the innovative short-term solutions that they are taking.

- The government, led by the Department and the Department for Work & Pensions, should develop a much better understanding of the interactions between local housing markets and welfare reform to evaluate fully the causes of homelessness.

A copy of the report can be found on the National Audit Office at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Homelessness.pdf>

Polly Neate, Chief Executive of the homelessness charity Shelter, said that:

"We are calling on the government to act now, in this year's budget, to end the freeze on housing benefit and to commit to building decent homes at affordable rents."

The report follows a study by Crisis, that warned that homelessness in Britain would surge by 76% over the next decade unless the government took urgent action.

A government spokesperson said that:

"Tackling homelessness is a complex issue with no single solution, but this government is determined to help the most vulnerable in society."

The government is committing £550million until 2020 to implement its Homelessness Reduction Act that is intended to help people before they become homeless. To see our briefing paper on the Flexible Homelessness Reduction Grant, please click here: <http://awics.co.uk/flexible-homelessness-support-grant>

What many people find difficult to understand is why the government does not take more effective steps to reduce the use of temporary accommodation as this would both benefit homeless people and save money for local authorities. There have been numerous studies that demonstrate that using the resources to build social housing would not only enable councils and housing associations to house more people but would produce a net saving for the public finances because the investment would be fully recouped (and more) through savings in temporary accommodation budgets.

Cynics (if they were inclined to use Latin legal phrases) would ask the question: 'Cui Bono?'. This is defined as follows:

" 'Cui bono?', literally 'for whose benefit?', is a Latin phrase which is still in use as a key forensic question in legal and police investigation: finding out who has a motive for a crime. It is an adage that is used either to suggest a hidden motive or to indicate that the party responsible for something may not be who it appears at first to be."

Neither the government, nor the local authorities, nor the homeless benefit from the increasing use of temporary accommodation. However, there appears to be a significant financial benefit to the private landlords and 'hoteliers' that provide the temporary accommodation. Cynics may suggest that the government is actually more interested in promoting the interests of private landlords and 'hoteliers' than they are in protecting either the homeless or public budgets!

Councils ask for more flexibility with Right to Buy Receipts

Following the Conservatives' commitment in their election manifesto to allow Councils in England more resources and greater flexibility in return for building more affordable homes, the 'Association of Retained Council Housing' is arguing that it is time to remove all restrictions over the use of Right to Buy receipts. Writing in 'Inside Housing', John Bibby, their Chief Executive, argued that Councils should not only be able to use receipts for shared ownership housing, but should have complete freedom over the money raised.

There has been a significant increase in the number of 'right to buy' sales in England since the coalition government introduced their 're-invigorated right to buy' scheme in 2012 that included greatly increased discounts, a complex formula that divided the receipts between local government and the Treasury and detailed rules about how local authorities could spend their share of the receipts – including a requirement that all the proceeds should be spent on affordable housing but that they could not cover more than 30% of the cost of a scheme. At the time, the government stated that there would be one-for-one replacement of the dwellings sold, but in practice this has not been achieved. The Department for Communities & Local Government's own data shows that, in practice, only a third of the dwellings that are being sold are being replaced.

The government has also placed constraints on the resources available to councils for housing generally. The self-financing settlement of 2012 resulted in a 'borrowing cap' being imposed and councils being faced with an increase in their debts because the government calculated that they could afford this as their rents would increase. However, the Welfare & Work Act 2016 obliges councils to reduce their rents by 1% a year from 2016 to 2019 putting financial pressure on housing revenue accounts.

Government has also decided to limit housing benefit to the level of the local housing allowance and proposes to make good the loss of funding through a system of local funding, the details of which have yet to emerge. The Housing & Planning Act 2016 included provision for the mandatory sale of high value council homes but these provisions have yet to be enacted and it is not clear whether they will be. The government has yet to announce what its rent policy will be from 2020 (see below). All of this creates significant uncertainty.

Fifty councils have come together to make a request to ministers to be able to use Right to Buy receipts to fund open market shared ownership housing to replace the social rented homes sold under the Right to Buy.

They are suggesting that the 30% receipts should be used to purchase part of an open market home, with the remaining portion of the equity bought by a local resident. The buyer would then pay rent on the council's 30% share in a shared ownership deal, with councils able to use separate funding to top up the offer. A spokesperson told 'Inside Housing' that:

"The reality is that most local authorities really want to spend these receipts but they just aren't able to... This model isn't perfect but it will help them to provide affordable housing locally and it is very easily done. It isn't going to solve all the problems but it will help local people rather than the money going back into the central pool."

A spokesperson for the Department for Communities & Local Government told 'Inside Housing' that:

"We have received (the) correspondence and we are currently considering their proposals for the use of Right to Buy receipts."

John Bibby argues in favour of this as follows:

"For many councils, converting the net capital receipts received into new social rented housing simply does not stack-up."

"Right to Buy receipts derive from the sale of social rented housing and many would argue that the receipts should stay in the social housing sector and be used to fund the promised one-for-one replacement of social rented housing sold under the Right to Buy and help halt the further depletion of the stock of social rented housing."

“However the simple fact remains that the restrictions placed on councils by central government, coupled with the rising cost of land and construction, means that in many instances it is impossible to fund the building of new social rented homes to replace those sold.

“These restrictions can sometimes mean that the capital receipts from Right to Buy sales can often be left unspent and/or be reclaimed by central government. What is required is a complete root and branch review of the use of Right to Buy capital receipts and the removal of all restrictions giving local councils the freedom to decide how best to use such Right to Buy receipts at a local level to meet local housing needs.

“Given complete freedom and the lifting of restrictions on the proportion of any capital receipts that can be used to fund new homes, many councils will no doubt decide to commit such resources to building replacement social rented housing, others might choose to invest all or part of the capital receipts into affordable rented housing, shared ownership or other forms of affordable housing.

“The key is that this will be a local decision made at a local level to meet local needs. The dead hand of the Treasury must be lifted.

“Ministers must remove all restrictions on the use of Right to Buy receipts and give local councils the freedom to decide how best to use those receipts to build new homes to meet the specific local housing needs in their areas.”

Many people in the sector are uncertain about proposals to use resources generated by the sale of social housing for shared-ownership housing rather than the replacement of the social houses that have been sold. However, most people in the sector would be in favour of local authorities being permitted to take their own decisions about the use of their resources and the Association of Retained Council Housing is taking a pragmatic approach towards what can be achieved in the current political and economic climate.

Government appears to be having difficulty in taking decisions about many policy areas, including housing, at present. If they could take an initiative to ensure that their original objective of one-for-one replacement of homes sold under ‘right to buy’ was achieved in practice, that would be welcome.

Right to Buy receipts are one of the matters that will be considered at our seminar: ‘Housing Business Planning in an Uncertain Environment’ (see below).

Update on Rent Policy

Following George Osborne’s surprise announcement in his budget in 2015 that social rents in local authorities and housing associations would be reduced by 1% a year from 2016 to 2019, there has been speculation about what rent policy would be for 2020 and subsequently, and very little firm information from government. The Housing White Paper of February 2017, proposed a new deal on rents but provided no indication of what the government would decide or when it would make an announcement.

However, Sajid Javid, the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government has now said that a new rent policy would be announced ‘very, very soon’ and that this would include setting out a formula for social landlord’s rents. Speaking to northern housing association chief executives and representatives from northern councils at the launch of a report on housing need in the North, he pledged to settle the question of what will happen to social landlords’ rents after 2020 and said that:

“We said we’d consult and then set out a formula. We’re going to do that very, very soon.”

**AWICS Ltd., PO Box 17, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria. CA16 6YL. Tel: 017683-51498.
Mobile: 07502-142658. Twitter @AdrianWaite. E-Mail: adrian.waite@awics.co.uk. Web: www.awics.co.uk**

Managing Director: Adrian Waite MA CPFA CIHM FInstLM. Registered office: c/o Butterworths Solicitors, 3 Walker Terrace, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 1EB. Company Number: 3713554. VAT Registration Number: 721 9669 13.

'Inside Housing' has suggested that the fact that Sajid Javid mentioned a 'formula' could suggest a return to a universal rate, such as the consumer price index plus 1%, the previous rate of increase for rents, that was abandoned in favour of the rent reductions. However, he could also mean the introduction of a new formula that would replace the current social rent formula that was established when John Prescott was Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for housing in 2002.

Several solutions have been suggested by people outside government, including a report from Policy Exchange published in September 2016 that suggested that housing associations could be given flexibility over rent in exchange for certain volumes of housebuilding. In the Conservatives' 2017 general election manifesto, the party promised to 'give greater flexibility to housing associations to increase their housing stock'. Similar statements were made about local authorities. This was assumed to mean that housing associations and local authorities would be given greater flexibilities over rents (and local authorities would be allowed additional borrowing) as part of agreements to deliver additional affordable housing.

Our briefing paper on the housing policies of the main political parties in England can be viewed by clicking here: http://awics.co.uk/files/module_document_pdfs/general_election_2017_-_housing_policies_-_briefing_paper.pdf

In the past, housing associations have advocated more flexibility on rents. For example, four in five respondents to a National Housing Federation consultation at the end of 2016 said that rent freedom would allow them to meet their long-term objectives better.

At that time, Keith Exford, Chief Executive of Clarion Housing Group, told 'Inside Housing' that:

"We would like to see more flexibility to set rents. UK rent policy is a mess and people living in similar properties pay very different rents. We would have a more coherent system; a fairer, more level system (with rent freedom)."

And Paul Hackett, Chief Executive of Amicus Horizon, told 'Inside Housing' that housing association boards were best placed to make judgements on affordability, local markets and local needs to set rents for those locations. He said that:

"The more flexibility the government can give housing associations in terms of grants, rents and how we use our assets, the more it would help us maximise delivery. (Rent freedom) would give housing associations more control of their business plans and long-term revenue streams, create confidence among lenders and ultimately allow us to increase development programmes and build more homes."

However, Tony Stacey, Chief Executive of South Yorkshire Housing Association, cautioned that there should be some checks on associations' abilities to set rents and told 'Inside Housing' that:

"The system of rent-setting at the moment is a mess... Housing association boards should be able to do it but I would not give them complete carte blanche. It should be within a framework and they should sign up to making a proportion affordable for people on low incomes. Delivery is critical but I am concerned about the affordability of rent."

The response from the sector more recently has been less enthusiastic. Since the election, the government is understood to have raised this idea with the sector, although privately many social landlords have said it would be extremely difficult to make work in practice.

Responding to Sajid Javid's announcement, a Housing Accountant with a Unitary Authority in Southeast England said that:

"I am not optimistic re: (a) timing, (b) content, or (c) flexibility to consultation responses. There are many things government could do overnight to reduce constraints on council housing (e.g., relax some conditions on use of 1-4-1 receipts) so I can't imagine that having kept us waiting since the election they're now going to produce something helpful. Remember how much help we got (or rather, didn't get) from the Housing White Paper?"

Rent policy is one of the matters that will be considered at our seminar: 'Housing Business Planning in an Uncertain Environment' (see below).

Meanwhile the Welsh Government has also announced a review of social housing rents. This is covered in the September 2017 edition of the AWICS Housing News. To view a copy, please click here: http://awics.co.uk/files/module_document_pdfs/awics_housing_news_-_september_2017.pdf

Housing Statistics for Scotland provide mixed news

The Housing Statistics for Scotland are published quarterly with the latest edition, published in September 2017 providing mixed news.

First, the bad news: They showed that under the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, 1,592 homes were built between April and June 2017, a 6% decrease on the same period in 2016. The figures also showed that 7,336 homes were built across 2016/17. While this was a 13% increase on the previous year, it represents only 14% of the government's target to build 50,000 new homes over five years. Most of these homes (63%) were new build and the remainder were off-the-shelf purchases or rehabilitations.

Second, the good news: Housing starts and approvals increased between April and June, with 2,076 affordable homes started – a 14% increase – and 1,456 affordable homes approved, 30% more than the previous year, bringing the total number of approvals over the year to 10,612. Also, between 2015/16 and 2016/17, the number of new house builds started, across the public and private sector, rose by 4% from 17,765 to 18,391, the fourth consecutive annual increase and the highest annual number of starts since 2008/9.

Scotland's Minister for Housing, Kevin Stewart said:

"One of the most important factors in any person's quality of life is their housing and access to good quality, warm and affordable housing is a vital part of our drive to secure economic growth, strengthen communities and tackle inequalities.

"This government is committed to delivering more affordable housing per head of the population than the United Kingdom government. We are offering significantly more grant funding for each unit of affordable housing, with each unit in Scotland supported by an average of £52,400 compared to just £25,300 in England.

"We're also building social housing at a faster rate than any other part of the United Kingdom, with the total number of social sector homes started by the end of June 2017 increasing to 6,234, 32% more than the year to end 2016.

"Over the lifetime of this Parliament, we will invest more than £3 billion to deliver 50,000 affordable homes. This is a massive investment backing up our target which is ambitious, challenging and absolutely necessary."

However, Graeme Brown, Director of Shelter Scotland, said that:

“These figures show that last year only 7,336 new homes were completed under the Affordable Housing Supply Programme. This is just 14% of the Scottish Government’s five-year target to build 50,000 new affordable homes.”

The Housing Statistics for Scotland can be found on the Scottish Government’s website at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS>

Housing (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill

Following the decision of the Office for National Statistics to reclassify Scotland’s housing associations as public sector bodies in September 2016, the Scottish Government has responded by introducing the Housing (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Parliament. This seeks to place Scottish housing associations back into the private sector thus preventing their borrowing from counting against the Scottish Government’s borrowing limits.

The reason why the Office for National Statistics decided to reclassify Scottish housing associations was because of the extent of the powers of the Scottish Housing Regulator to intervene in their affairs. Consequently, the Bill would amend the powers of the Scottish Housing Regulator to ensure the reclassification while continuing to empower the Regulator to protect tenants’ interests.

The Bill proposes to reduce the powers the Scottish Housing Regulator has to:

- Appoint a manager to a housing association.
- Suspend, remove and appoint officers of a housing association.
- Exercise control over the disposal (e.g. a sale) of land and housing assets by a housing association (by requiring them to obtain the Regulator’s consent to a disposal).
- Exercise consent over any changes to the constitution of a housing association.
- Exercise control over voluntary winding-up, dissolution and restructuring of a housing association (mainly by requiring a them to obtain the Regulator’s consent to these actions).

The Bill also provides for Scottish Ministers to modify the functions of the Regulator and to reduce local authority influence over housing associations in regulations.

The Scottish Government is currently out for consultation on the Bill. In its invitation for written views, the local government and communities committee has asked respondents to address the following questions in relation to the aims of the Bill:

- Do you agree that measures should be taken to influence the Office for National Statistics to reclassify Registered Social Landlords as private sector bodies; and if not, please explain why?
- Do you have any views on the appropriateness of the measures proposed in this Bill to bring about this reclassification?
- Do you have views on whether the aims of the Bill could be achieved by other means?
- Any other issues relating to the Bill which you wish to bring to the attention of the Committee?

The closing date for representations is 26th October 2017.

A copy of the Bill can be found on the Scottish Parliament’s website at: <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/105852.aspx>

Cumbria County Council invests in housing for the elderly

Cumbria County Council has announced the creation of a new £2million fund to provide better homes for the elderly. This is their 'Extra Care Housing Grant Award' scheme, that aims to attract builders and businesses and help to ensure that housing is fit for the future. The grants programme makes up almost half of the £4.24million that the council has set aside in capital funding for extra care housing and supported living accommodation, with the aim of delivering 2,000 more homes across the county by 2025 and relieving pressure on its own adult social care services' residential care.

Councillor Peter Thornton (Liberal-Democrat), cabinet member for health and care services, said that:

"Cumbrians are proudly independent and want to live in their own homes for a long as possible. Extra care housing helps them to achieve this. We all hope to live to a ripe old age and our older years should be a time to enjoy a positive and fulfilling life, and having your own home is key to achieving this."

People who live in extra care housing have their own self-contained homes - usually with a lounge, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom - and access to care staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are also communal facilities and activities available. For many, it is the ideal solution as it means that they live in a home of their own, can stay together as a couple even with different levels of need, live as part of a supportive environment, in a location situated in the heart of the local community, but with the added reassurance that help is at hand. Supported Living accommodation is delivered on a range of scales from supporting an individual in a single property to several people in one scheme.

Councillor David Southward (Labour), cabinet member for economic development, added:

"I hope that many organisations and builders will step forward and show their commitment to working with us to help deliver quality homes for the elderly, now, and in the future."

During recent years there has been a reduction in the number of new extra care elderly schemes being developed by local authorities and housing associations mainly because of uncertainty about their future funding caused by changes to government policy that have yet to be fully developed.

The last extra care elderly scheme to be opened in Cumbria was Bramble Court in Brampton that was provided by Impact Housing Association of which I was a Board Member and Chair from 2009 to 2015. More information about Bramble Court can be found on Impact Housing Association's website at: <http://www.impacthousing.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Extra%20Care%20Brochure.pdf>

Our website contains briefing papers on the current problems with funding supported housing as follows:

- Report of Parliamentary Select Committees - http://awics.co.uk/files/module_document_pdfs/future_of_supported_housing_-_briefing_paper.pdf
- Service Charges and Housing Benefit in Supported Housing - http://awics.co.uk/files/module_document_pdfs/service_charges_and_housing_benefit_in_supported_housing_-_briefing_paper.pdf
- Funding for Supported Housing Consultation - <http://awics.co.uk/htrack/awics.co.uk/dynamicdata/data/docs/funding%2520for%2520supported%2520housing%2520consultation%2520%257E%2520briefing%2520paper.pdf>

- Funding of Supported Housing Announcement - <http://awics.co.uk/htrack/awics.co.uk/dynamicdata/data/docs/funding%2520of%2520supported%2520housing%2520-%2520briefing%2520paper.pdf>

Vale of Glamorgan Council - Community Infrastructure and Affordable Housing

Vale of Glamorgan Council has secured £9.8million for Community Infrastructure and Affordable Housing.

Between April 2016 and March 2017, 23 planning permissions have been granted that have been subject to Section 106 agreements. Section 106 agreements are agreed to address the impact of housing developments and in many cases to help improve the schemes themselves and include the provision of funding by developers for community infrastructure and affordable housing.

Once received, this money will be spent on public transport, walking and cycling, educational facilities, open spaces, children's play areas and improvements to community facilities near development sites. The Council also secured 'in kind' obligations, that developers will be required to deliver on-site, such as the implementation of public open space, affordable housing and public art.

Between April 2016 and March 2017, £1.4million was spent on Section 106 schemes across the Vale of Glamorgan. These included the Port Road Footway / Cycle Scheme in Barry, the Plassey Square play area improvements in Penarth, nursery provision at Gwenfo Primary School and the purchase of equipment for Murchfield Community Centre in Dinas Powys and Heol Llidiard Community Hall in Llangan. At the same time, 217 new build affordable housing units were built by developers as a result of Section 106 agreements and were made available to local residents who would not otherwise have been able to afford housing on the open market.

Councillor Jonathan Bird (Conservative), Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning told 'Business News Wales' that:

"In recent years the Vale has developed a very effective approach to maximising the contributions required from developers and pooling this money to fund schemes that make a big difference. Only last month it was announced that a new village hall will be built in Ogmere by Sea thanks to £287,000 of S106 funding. This is an approach that works and one that we will continue to use to improve and develop facilities across the county."

Editorial Note

The AWICS Housing News is published by AWICS Limited. This edition was edited by Adrian Waite. Articles are written by Adrian Waite unless otherwise stated. However, the views expressed are not necessarily those of Adrian Waite or AWICS unless expressly stated.

AWICS Surveys

At AWICS we value feedback from our clients and from users of our website. This is for two reasons:

- We actively seek feedback from clients so that we can evaluate what we are doing now and use the information to improve our services in future.

- We like to have a dialogue with clients and users of our website so that we can understand their developing needs and provide services to meet them as part of a long-term commercial relationship.

We have therefore developed a series of surveys and questionnaires that can be found at: <http://awics.co.uk/questionnaires-and-feedback>

These include a survey about our seminars. Whether or not you have attended one of our seminars recently, I would be grateful if you could assist us by completing our short survey. It can be found at: <https://form.jotformeu.com/71926426584364>

Housing Business Planning in an Uncertain Environment - Seminar

We are holding seminars on ‘Housing Business Planning in an Uncertain Environment’ during November 2017. These seminars will look in depth at how local authorities can update their housing revenue account business plans.

Business Planning has been an important element of the management of council housing for some time. However, we are now operating in a very uncertain environment. There is a minority government; the Housing & Planning Act will not be implemented in full; the future funding of supported housing is under threat; and the implications of the vote for Britain to leave the European Union are not clear.

The public finances are weak; welfare reform - including reform of housing benefit - is a ‘work in progress’; government policy on rent reductions, ‘right to buy’, new development and the integration of housing, social care & health are all unclear. Demographic change continues to put pressure on housing services. This requires a new way of business planning including a robust approach to the development of strategy, financial forecasting, sensitivity analysis, risk management and contingency planning.

The seminar will address the following questions:

- What are the key elements of a good quality housing revenue account business plan?
- What is the political, economic, social and technological environment in which local authority housing services operate? What are the key uncertainties?
- How can councils develop effective self-financed business plans that will address the new uncertain environment in a robust way? What assumptions should be made in the financial model? How can uncertainties be managed?
- What business planning techniques are now required including for strategy, financial forecasting, sensitivity analysis, risk management and contingency planning?

Who should attend?

- All those with an interest in business planning in local authority housing, including Managers in Local Authorities and Arm’s Length Management Organisations, Elected Members, ALMO Board Members, Housing Accountants and Tenant Representatives.

The session is interactive, includes specific practical examples and is accompanied by a very useful book entitled: “Housing Business Planning in an Uncertain Environment”

Venues and Dates:

- London: Novotel Hotel, Waterloo – Tuesday 7th November 2017
- North: Novotel Hotel, Leeds – Tuesday 21st November 2017

The price of the seminar in London is £250 plus Value Added Tax, a total of £300. The price of the seminar in Leeds is £195 plus Value Added Tax, a total of £234. However, there is a £20 discount for people who book a month or more in advance making the cost £230 plus Value Added Tax in London and £175 plus Value Added Tax in Leeds.

For further information or to make a booking, please click here: <http://awics.co.uk/housing-business-planning-in-an-uncertain-environment>

Other AWICS Seminars

Our next seminars are as follows:

- Welfare Reform 2017: The Implications for Housing
 - London – 5th December 2017
 - Leeds – 12th December 2017
- All You Want to Know about Service Charges in Social Housing in Wales
 - Cardiff – 14th February 2018
- All You Want to Know about Service Charges in Social Housing in England
 - London – 27th February 2018
- All You Want to Know about Local Authority Housing Finance
 - London – 13th March 2018

Information about all our seminars can be found at: <http://awics.co.uk/seminars2017> and <http://awics.co.uk/seminars-2018>

Feedback that we have received at our seminars can be found at: <http://awics.co.uk/course-feedback>

About 'AWICS'

'AWICS' is a management consultancy and training company. We specialise in providing support in finance and management to clients in local government and housing in England, Scotland and Wales. We are well known for our ability to analyse and explain complex financial and management issues clearly. Our mission statement is 'Independence, Integrity, Value'. We therefore provide support to clients from an independent standpoint that is designed to help the client to achieve their objectives. We are passionate about working with the utmost integrity. We believe that we offer the best value for money that is available today!

For more information about our services and us please visit our website at www.awics.co.uk or contact Adrian Waite at Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk. Services that we offer include:

- Management Consultancy – <http://www.awics.co.uk/ManagementConsultancy.asp>
- Interim Management – <http://www.awics.co.uk/interimmanagement.asp>
- Regional Seminars - <http://www.awics.co.uk/seminars2017.asp>
- In-House Training - <http://www.awics.co.uk/inHouseCourses.asp>
- Webinars - <http://www.awics.co.uk/webinars.asp>
- Independent Residents' Advice – <http://www.awics.co.uk/IndependentTenantAdvice.asp>
- Technical Books - <http://www.awics.co.uk/publications.asp>
- Information Service - <http://www.awics.co.uk/aboutUs.asp>

AWICS Ltd., PO Box 17, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria. CA16 6YL. Tel: 017683-51498.
Mobile: 07502-142658. Twitter @AdrianWaite. E-Mail: adrian.waite@awics.co.uk. Web: www.awics.co.uk

Managing Director: Adrian Waite MA CPFA CIHM FInstLM. Registered office: c/o Butterworths Solicitors, 3 Walker Terrace, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 1EB. Company Number: 3713554. VAT Registration Number: 721 9669 13.

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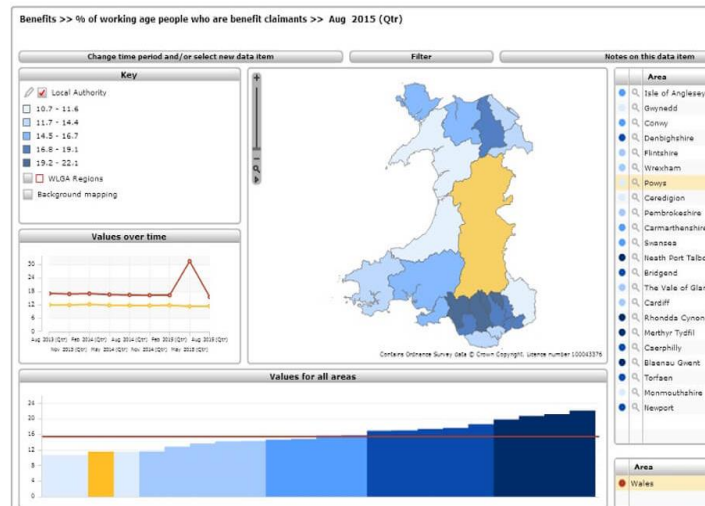
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- presents data in reports, tables and maps which are all easy to export

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InfoBaseCymru is accessed via the internet for public use, we can provide restricted shared access to specific data sets where necessary.



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AWICS Ltd., PO Box 17, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria. CA16 6YL. Tel: 017683-51498.
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