

## **Housing Champion Report Annual Town Meeting May 31st 2023**

The Housing Crisis persists in Ilfracombe and the last year has been very tough for many households in Ilfracombe due to a lack of private rentals in the area. As Housing Champion I meet three times a year alongside other partners, with the Head of Housing and his team to review the homelessness situation. Sadly we have a number of Ilfracombe families and individuals in temporary accommodation, some of whom have been in this situation for many months. In February I reported that over the previous 9 months 356 households were placed into temporary accommodation. Much of the temporary accommodation is in Holiday Properties. The District Council have recently purchased 8 units of temporary accommodation in order to provide a better alternative to bed and breakfast or holiday parks for households who cannot find somewhere to live.

I am a member of Ilfracombe Community Land Trust. In November I reported that throughout the last year Ilfracombe Community Land Trust, in partnership with North Devon District Council, has been working to try to progress a parcel of land to build 15-17 homes for local people for social rent in perpetuity. The Trust expects to be able to present plans for the site in a public engagement exercise later this year.

In December I reported on the publication of ONS statistics that indicated that the level of deprivation had increased in Ilfracombe. Health inequality has also increased. We know that there is a link between poor housing and health outcomes. Much of my work as Housing Champion has been with households experiencing poor living conditions in private rental properties. This has involved helping people to access help and support from the appropriate agencies to tackle their situation and in particular environmental health. Other agencies whom I've connected with over poor housing and health include Encompass, Shelter, Citizens Advice, the Drug and Alcohol Service and health services.

In September as Housing Champion I completed the Government consultation on developing a 'Tourist Accommodation Registration Scheme'. My response was around the impact on the availability of housing in Ilfracombe. I also submitted a response to the recent Parliamentary debate on the same issue which was read out.

In June I reported on the closure by NDC, of the Marlborough which was a House of Multiple Occupation in Ilfracombe which accommodated people with complex support needs. The property was beset by multiple problems around a toxic culture that had developed and the very poor living conditions. We do have an issue in Ilfracombe with some housing providers who offer supported living but who fail to provide the support that people need. This is something that needs to be tackled at a national level.

Other work throughout the year has been submitting responses to consultations around affordable housing and commenting on planning applications to insist that any developments in Ilfracombe achieve the affordable housing element. Unfortunately we have seen examples throughout North Devon recently where substantial developments have managed to avoid building any affordable housing or have later reneged on the number built. It is essential that we campaign to ensure that affordable elements in any developments are achieved and we must push North Devon District Council to ensure s106 commitments are watertight.