

## **Torbay's housing strategy 2015-2020**

**Chairman:** We now move to item 8, Torbay's housing strategy 2015 – 2020, Mayors response to Councils recommendations, Councillor O'Dwyer.

**Cllr O'Dwyer:** Thank you Mr Chairman I would just like to declare a non pecuniary interest.

**Chairman:** Thank you. As you will be aware any amendments to change this, the Mayors policy framework proposal requires two thirds of the members present and voting accepts the amendment and the substantive motion if the amendment falls the mayors policy framework proposal will stand and therefore no further vote will be taken. Can Councillor King please put his motion to the Council.

**Cllr King:** To Councillors I am pleased that we are now able to re-present our Torbay housing strategy for 2015 – 2020. The Mayor has considered the recommendations of the overview and scrutiny board and published his response informed by my advice, as lead councillor of this portfolio, on the 8<sup>th</sup> January. I believe all the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny reports have been responded to and the summary strategy document has been substantially reworked to allow the detail of target and drivers to be included. The covering report to Council shows a useful table in which each recommendation has a summary reply. The housing strategy remains an umbrella of documents and the associated documents i.e. the homelessness strategy and commissioning plan 'My home is my life' has not been altered as no specific objections were made to the associated documents and plans.

I reiterate from my introduction to this strategy before Christmas that the Council recognises through this strategy the challenges that we face in Torbay in enabling the right mix and choice of housing. Housing is part of our plans to improve the economic prosperity and healthy lives of people in the bay. The delivery plan recognises the activities that will steer us and our partners in the right direction in meeting housing demand, integrating housing and health commissioning and improving the quality of homes. Success is important in providing a housing system that works for everybody in a time of reducing resources and increased need. We want to get maximum benefit from changes in central government policy, this includes trying to have a positive relationship with developers as part of the delivery of the local plan to enable house building over the period. The strategy reminds us that the Council has enabled housing development over the last four years albeit it was in difficult market conditions during a recession. The new South Devon Highway will encourage more investment in the bay and we will use that and other opportunities to build more housing and improve housing standards over the next few years. Government policy in relation to housing is changing and the Council will need to remain nimble and responsive to new opportunities as they appear, and a degree of flexibility will be needed if our delivery plans and our overall ambitions will remain the same.

Finally a reminder our homelessness strategy is before you tonight and it is a statutory element of the housing strategy. It has been consulted on, we are all facing increasing pressure on homelessness in the bay and the plan supports close partnership working to mitigate as much as possible and prevent, where we can, those at risk of homelessness. I recommend this housing strategy and the homeless plan to this Council this evening.

**Chairman:** Thank you Councillor, do you have a seconder?

**Councillor Mills:** Yes Chairman I rise to second and reserve my right.

**Chairman:** Councillor Thomas

**Councillor D Thomas:** Thank you very much indeed... apologies, I do have an amendment which I wish to be circulated please.

**Chairman:** Having the document in front of me I will call for a five minute break to allow members to read and hopefully digest the content. Thank you.

5 Minute break

**Chairman:** Right, Councillors, Thank you. If you could take your seats we will now resume you have had time, I hope, to browse the document Councillor .....

**Councillor D Thomas:** Thank you very much indeed Mr Chairman. Ok, so the amendment that has now been proposed and put on the table, I have just heard a few members say 'there's a lot of words here we haven't read it and where's it come from'. So let's just talk about first of all where this amendment has actually come from, and a lot of members will have already seen it on a number of occasions. So, first of all I would like to thank the executive lead for the work that he has done on the housing strategy not forgetting that it was from a motion from myself that asked for the housing strategy to be brought forward at early opportunity, and that has come forward which is fantastic. So the amendment that is on the table tonight, originates from a conversation that a number of members had with the lead housing officer, xxxxxxxx, as to what should be in the housing strategy that hasn't made the final cut. What should have been there?, is there anything at all that should have been there that isn't there? that was the question. What we received back is effectively this document. So what you have in front of you tonight Councillors is basically an officer's piece of work, this is not a political amendment and you will see that it has been produced cross party. So it is split effectively into three parts; increasing the supply of affordable homes, dealing with our care homes and land availability. This in no way detracts from the housing strategy; this effectively provides an action plan as a bolt on to the housing strategy to add some more meat on to the bones. Councillor King spoke about the housing strategy needs to be nimble, responsive and flexible; I would suggest that this amendment adds all those things into the housing strategy. The first eight items that appear there within the, increasing the supply of affordable homes, they are a whole host of options that, treat it as a tool kit that you can basically use one item from the tool kit, two or all of them, they are all effectively there. Dealing with our care homes, the Edwardian Victorian villa revival they are not new words to members who have spent any time since May within this Council. You will have heard xxxxxxxx, from Planning, talking about that care homes are going to change, we know, Julian has spoken before about the fact that the care home market will change. We know that we will have empty care homes, how are we going to respond to that? This provides us with a hook, basically, to bring forward the Edwardian Victoria villa revival. Land availability, that phrasing there that wording has been lifted straight out of the corporate asset management plan, you will see that basically in the documents later on but that basically, and it also picks up timely on what the peer review said. We had the peer review, just before Christmas and it was saying to us that, we need to be bold, we need to be brave, we need to make sure that we provide land for housing of all different kinds of tenure, and we also need to make sure that this Council has an income stream for the next 20 or 30 years onwards. it basically aligns with all of those key thinking, so I would suggest that this fits in perfectly with being nimble, responsive, flexibility, it's right bang up to date, it's an officers set of words. I can't imagine that any member would have anything to trouble them with this and to be

honest, the only reason it is here now is because I did share it with Councillor King last week, with an opportunity that hopefully Councillor King would have added this into the strategy, unfortunately I found out late on Monday night that that wasn't going to be included so that is why it is actually here .... thank you. As an amendment tonight, don't forget of course it is a policy development framework document, which means that in order for it to be adopted two thirds of the Council need to support this, so I am looking forward to lots of support. I believe it is the right thing for the Council to do. Thank you Mr Chairman.

**Chairman:** Thank you Councillor. Do you have a seconder?

**Councillor S Darling:** Yes Chair I would like ... and I would like to reserve my right to speak at the end. Thank you Chair.

**Chairman:** Thank you. We will now open the amendment to debate. Councillor Lewis

**Councillor Lewis:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. Having looked through the amendment I cannot see why anyone would object to it. We live in an area in Torbay with a lot of deprived areas, in Tormohun, the Councillors for Tormohun, Ellacombe, Councillors for Ellacombe, Roundham and Hyde, they need help with affordable housing, they need to be shown that we as Torbay Council will take the lead in trying to push forward the affordable homes. When I was in Councillor Kings position eight years ago it was something we tried to do, it was difficult. This I think is a bonus and as Councillor Thomas said this is not written by a group of politicians, this is written by a senior officer as a recommendation to go with the housing strategy. So if we vote this down, we are voting down an amendment which has been recommended by someone who is an expert in that field. And on that note I would like to ask Councillor King, if he is giving full support to it great, if he has reservations with the Mayor and the Executives can he pinpoint, when he stands up to speak, of which items in this amendment he doesn't agree with? Because he has got to stand up, and all those people who don't vote for this and look the people in their wards and those deprived wards that they haven't pushed for affordable housing. This bay needs the help of this Council, and I would give a message to the people Torbay that we are a caring Council, that we want more affordable homes in this bay, and that we do that by supporting this amendment so that it becomes part of the housing strategy. I for everyone support, and if they won't give their support I would like Councillor King when he stands up to outline point by point which ones he objects to. Thank you Mr Chairman.

**Chairman:** Thank you Councillor. Councillor Sanders.

**Councillor Sanders:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. It's twenty nine years since I was last at a full Council meeting, and I have been trying to catch up on the new standing orders, all 500 pages of our constitution it's not easy. But I was first elected to this Council, I beat the then Chairman of housing, one Harry Perkins, in the Blatchcombe ward. Back then the Council was the landlord for 6,500 properties. They were low rent, there were few complaints from tenants, although that's not true in some areas, but there were few complaints from tenants. The estates were largely mixed in terms of the jobs that people did, about a third of the estates were people who were in work, about a third were retired and about a third were probably welfare dependent. It's very different to the mix of people you will find in social housing today, and by and large our estates were quite well maintained. We know the history; the right to buy came in, giving people big discounts in order to purchase properties, quite rightly the right to buy allowed people to purchase, whether the

discounts were too generous or not is a political debate for another day. Not replacing those houses though was a big error, and of course at the time that the entire stock that remained after those sales to Riviera housing took place there were only 3000 properties, over half the stock had gone under right to buy. So it is no surprise that today there are actually over 3000 people on our housing waiting list, some of whom will be deemed to have such a low need for housing, because the criteria is such that you have to be in real dire straits to be allocated a social house today, some of those people on that list will never ever be offered an allocation, and we allocate on average around 200 properties a year then you don't need to be a mathematician to work out some people are going to be waiting for a long time. And of course people who are inadequately or inappropriately housed actually find that they are on a road downwards, certainly the children in inadequate housing will not do as well at school as children who are in adequate housing, where there is room to play, where there is room to do homework, where there is room to not be under the stress and strains of a family that's in inadequate housing. Relationships are more likely to break down, there's more like to be money problems, health and social care is more likely to be needed for people in inadequate housing, so there are social costs that we pick up part of the bill of down the track, if you do not provide decent affordable housing for those in need. To me there's three key elements to a successful economy; one of them is skills, and we have done well in Torbay over the years in improving skills, the results in our local schools, we've got an excellent college that is certainly giving people skills and vocational certificates that equip them well for the labour market. The second part is communication, and communication is not just physical communication such as, the new link road which is making a big difference to the economy, and is going to make some significant differences to many other elements of what occurs within the bay if we get it right, but it is also about broadband the digital connectivity that we have with the rest of the world, now we are getting that right. The third element is affordable housing, because if you have skilled people who can't afford to live here then they will go and meet labour market shortages elsewhere, and if you want to attract people into here to run businesses, or you want businesses here to expand, then they need skilled workers but if the skilled workers can't afford to be here then they are not going to be here.

**Chairman:** Thank you Councillor you have 30 seconds.

**Councillor Sanders:** It's not a question about the numbers of houses, it's really about the type of housing, it's about meeting local housing need. This amendment goes some way to addressing it, I don't think it goes far enough but it's a start, and it's a good start with cross party support and I can't see why any member of this council would oppose it.

**Chairman:** Thank you Councillor....

**Councillor Stockman:** Thank you Chairman. There are several things I like about this amendment, one as has already been said it's a cross party amendment and what that says is to the people of Torbay is that we are finally willing to work together on their behalf. The next thing is it's an action plan, and for the whole of the time that I have been a Councillor I have noticed that on our strategy documents very rarely do we actually see an action plan, and so this is really good because this says that we're prepared, not to just to write up a strategy but we are prepared to take action on it. And the third thing is that virtually every needs assessment that we have actually looked at, for education and health, actually points to better living accommodation for families within the bay, so I whole heartedly support this amendment.

**Chairman:** Councillor Morey.

**Councillor Morey:** Thank you Chair. Listening to Councillor Sanders here, I too remember the Council sell off and the repercussions and the big hole that did leave in the affordable housing in Torbay. This amendment does focus on a subject not only close to my heart, I anticipate it is close to many of you here, and that is it is putting as a priority the affordable housing issue. In a low wage area, in an area of deprivation like Tormohun, like Ellacombe and other wards it is difficult for a large number of our residents not actually not only to get on the housing market but actually to be able to afford rented accommodation. This amendment does go some way to address this, and as previously said it is cross party I too would like it to have gone a lot further but stage by stage there is plenty of time yet, well not plenty of time it needs to be done sooner rather than later, but as Councillor Thomas did say this, this actually puts a bit of meat on the bone and likewise I would be interested to hear from those who oppose this, why? As I can see absolutely no argument why members should oppose this. Thank you.

**Chairman:** Mayor Oliver, thank you.

**Mayor:** I would have liked to have encouraged people to defer this particular amendment, when it was presented to the Conservative group it didn't have dealing with care homes or land availability on it, so those two have not been debated or even seen before tonight by the Conservative group. I say to my colleagues those two additions will make a huge difference to what is going to happen because you vote for this of course this will stop the Churston situation continuing and will mean that the Churston bid and the work associated with that, representative of the views of the people of Churston will be defeated if you vote for this tonight. So I say to my Conservative colleagues, you haven't seen this before these two points, it will change the policy on the sale of a lot of assets, we still need 1.7 million pounds, we're short and it may snarl up the sale of assets for other policies we will want to make so I say to you please do not support this in its present form. You have had an opportunity, I agree to everything that overview and scrutiny wanted, everything that you mentioned I have agreed to. Then at the last minute, what I may recall perhaps as a left-wing alliance here, if I may say so, to stop some of these things happening we support exactly what is exactly in the plan ....however it has to be done in a manner that does not affect existing legislation, if I can quote the housing bill goes to the lords next week, the LGA are very happy for us to have open and individual discussions with the government on housing issues. We can talk to them now and have an opportunity to decide, working with them, the best way forward and quickly for housing in Torbay, social housing, affordable housing because we need to do something quickly. But I do say to my colleagues you have two additional items here you have never seen before, you have to be honest and straight with the people of Churston that if you vote for this, it has been added in without your knowledge or consent or debate, and I implore you to defer this today, do not support it as it is in this form, let our own government through the housing and planning bill look at the implications to that, that in itself will out date this particular document. We have been fair and reasonable to everybody in what Mark King has proposed. Why didn't you put these things through overview and scrutiny? No you didn't, you wanted to vote on it now and rush it through. It is deceptive; I allege it is deceptive for those people who don't understand what those two last items mean. I am telling you what they mean, and if you want to have a decent, honest assessment of helping people in Torbay, do it in a manner that is open and transparent because this does not. And I am saying to you, if you vote for this tonight you will have all hell let loose elsewhere because it is not

fair and reasonable to do it in this manner. We need to look at the implications of the new bill and what the government is supporting and their keen as ever to push through and to make housing so important for the future and to help the people of Torbay. So please listen to what I am saying and bear in mind you have not seen, until today, what this means, I am telling you what it means. I would like to have this deferred so we can look at the implications of the housing bill, which goes to the house of lords second reading, and an offer from the LGA to us to talk directly with the government and get some real advantage out of speeding it up. But be so careful today, because if you make the wrong decision you will upset a huge number of people. And something else, as a last thing Chairman, part of this proposal, if you like a recommendation, is to move a lot of elderly people out of their existing homes, this was tried some years ago. Just be careful what you're....

Chairman: Can we have some silence...

Mayor Oliver: Just be careful what you're voting for and what this may mean to a lot of people who you will upset. We need a balanced and fair assessment to help the people of Torbay this is not the way forward.

Chairman: Thank you, before I move to the next speaker can we have some respectful silence whilst the member is presenting their case. Thank you. Councillor Excell.

Councillor Excell: Thank you Chairman. Likewise I would like to echo what Gordon has said but you know there is a lot of good stuff in this, but unfortunately one area that I always look at, more than anybody in my executive role for the communities, I look at people and how they live and where they are being moved from. If they are being moved they are normally moved in downsized to an area they may not know they may not have no friends and they have to restart their lives when they are elderly they may have lost their partners. And I think that not enough thought is put into how we downsize and how we, you know do the people actually want to downsize out of their areas and go start a new life? Nine times out of ten they don't, they could be living next to all sorts of people they have no, who they want to live with, you know I think we should be a bit more mindful .... Talk about downsizing we don't think just about the bricks and mortar but we think about the people who live there and do they want to end their lives in a completely strange place, and being hassled one way or another so I think that .... in my opinion a lot more work needs to be done before we march down that road. Thank you.

Chairman: Councillor Mills.

Councillor Mills: Yes, Thank you Chair. Until about 10 minutes ago I was quite happy with this..... Ok I will start again. Until about 10 minutes ago I was quite happy with this paper until we are delivered a very, very late amendment with the two items on the end, dealing with our care homes and land availability. I am not going to repeat or reiterate what the Mayor said only to say that if I vote for this amendment I will be doing my voters a disservice, so I am afraid to tell everybody that I will be voting against this amendment and if this amendment is passed I shall be voting against the housing strategy. Thank you.

Chairman: Councillor Bye.

Councillor Bye: Thank you Mr Chairman. I have been called many things in my life, I have not been called a leftie. I remember Councillor Sanders and I, we were radical young liberals together once in

the 1980's, and I very much hope that we can work cross party and that this Council can be absolutely passionate about meeting the housing needs of the people of Torbay, that is what I see is what it is all about. I am very pleased that Councillor King and the Mayor have taken on board some of the suggestions that have been made, so the housing strategy is revised, but it doesn't go far enough and it needs strengthening. Talking about encouraging the development of properties so that older people and others might down size, is not forcing anybody into anything, it is about providing choice. No one, absolutely no one will be made to move out of where they chose to live, what we will be doing is increasing the supply or, we hope to increase the supply, of properties that people will freely chose in, absolutely thereby freeing up larger properties much needed for families. Look at the evidence here at the back of the housing strategy, Torbay is amongst the top 15% most deprived local authorities in England, levels of deprivation have increased, there has been a 75% increase in Torbay residents living in areas amongst the most deprived, total number of homeless applications and decisions has more than doubled since 2011-2012, we have 3000 households on our waiting lists, we know the prices for both renting and buying in the private sector have gone way beyond what people on modest incomes in the bay can typically afford, something has to be done. What we are doing at the moment we are not doing enough, we are only delivering something like 353, 350 homes a year in the previous decade we were actually building 6,7,800 homes a year, 100 to 150 of those were affordable units, we actually used to meet our targets and were praised in the delivery of affordable homes. What we have got to do is absolutely strengthen this strategy. xxxxxx, an officer who I work with very happily and very closely and who I greatly respect, has come up with proposals to strengthen the strategy, it is not political it is not left wing, it's not right wing, it's not down the middle, it's common sense, it's professional advice as to how we strengthen our housing strategy. So I very much hope that all members will support this and absolutely include the bit dealing with care homes, we've got redundant care homes because we have been so successful in supporting older people to live in their own accommodation, and look and see what happened up at Dunboyne that is an absolutely brilliant example of what was a redundant or under used residential home that is now a superb supported living project, we have got many similar properties like that which we can use in a similar way. And absolutely the land availability is not as the Mayor has said, something that would make it difficult to realise our capital asset disposal, it is actually something that would maintain the value of the Councils assets as we move towards disposal. So I very much hope that all members will work cross party and support this amendment. Thank you Mr Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you Councillor ...

Mayor: ..... of accuracy I'd like to challenge the figures.

Councillor D Thomas: Sorry Mr Chairman ..... Standing order Sir

Chairman: What point of order please..... One moment

Councillor Parrott: Sorry Chairman, who's chairing this?

Chairman: It's a ....

Mayor: Thank you very much for your guidance Chairman, can I have the report back. There was a point made about, by Councillor Bye on the housing completions. And there were many many

hundreds, 700 I was the figure mentioned? I just happen to have the question that was asked in 2008 to the then....

Chairman: This is not a... sorry Mr ... this is not a point of personal order we will continue with the meeting. Councillor Parrott.

Councillor Parrott: Thank you Chairman. I've listened to some humbug in this place before, but to be lectured from the rolling lawns of Preston by Councillor Lewis about the deprivation in my ward is a bit rich frankly. But I am more than happy to take the advice of Councillor Sanders who has much experience of the needs across the whole of the bay, so and much of what he said I agree with whole heartedly. I think there's a couple of things that I would say about this, I do have reservations about incentivising downsizing because, what a mouthful incentivising downsizing, because I wonder if that is the first step on the road to you know protesting outside the homes of people who have too much, and I do worry about that because it is a first step along that road and as a non lefty I do worry about such well intentioned plans but nevertheless it has got to be a matter for the individual what size house they choose to live in if they have the means to live there. I think the issue for me is, I mean I am told much about the attributes of xxxxxxx, and I have met him and he is a very personable chap and so on. But my understanding is the supporting officer for the housing strategy is xxxxxxx and I have been unable to speak to xxxxxxx, because she has been away, about the first 8 points and I am certainly not going to be voting against this amendment because there are very real problems within my ward and I would accept that, apart from number 7, which I do have real problems with it's a bit like the issue of telling women they're obese, you know I have real problems with that, and so I won't be voting against it however, I will be abstaining on this simply because I think I haven't had the opportunity to test some of the items within it with the person who is the supporting officer for this, xxxxxxxx. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you Councillor, Councillor Ellery

Councillor Ellery: Thank you Chairman. So now we know don't we, tomorrow if this gets defeated, I am walking down the fore street in Brixham meeting residents and constituents who have been on the waiting list for years and say I am awfully sorry, it got defeated because of worrying about the wealthy residents of Churston. Oh come on people, let's get real here. This is a strengthening of a strategy, done by an expert, not by us, not for any reason other than trying to improve the life and the houses of the people we represent. And we all sat here tonight caring about our residents or else we wouldn't be here, and then I hear something that we are all lefties and all the rest of it. I am sorry I care more about the residents I represent and the fact they have been waiting for years to get decent housing than I do about the wealthy residents of Churston. I fully support this amendment.

**Chairman:** Councillor Darling, Mandy.

**Councillor M Darling:** Thank you Mr Chairman. First can I say thank you to Councillor Lewis and Councillor Morey for championing Tormohun and the real needs in that area of housing and improvements. I went to a residents meeting there recently and I was challenged at that residents meeting by some of them who told me that a member of the Executive had said, that the reason why their housing wasn't being improved and more housing was because Councillor Mandy Darling was blocking the housing strategy. That is not the case. I support this amendment whole heartedly I

support improving the standards for the people of my ward and all the wards in Torbay and I would urge you to support this. Thank you.

**Chairman:** Councillor Tyerman.

**Councillor Tyerman:** Thank you Mr Chairman. It's a bit of a red letter day perhaps, I'm not sure I have ever been accused before of being part of a left wing conspiracy. I am not quite sure how to take that. When asked to speak Mr Chairman I was going to mention two points but Councillor Bye has adequately dealt with one. I'd like to just come on and mention the aspect of the clause there under land availability and say to Councillors, you actually have all had chance to see this wording, this wording was published in documents that came to Overview and Scrutiny as part of the asset management plan, been lifted exactly from there. Certainly it was read, I believe by most of the members of Overview and Scrutiny, it admittedly at the Overview and Scrutiny discussion didn't get much discussion, probably because none of us had a problem with it. That's the situation, Overview and Scrutiny accepted the logic of that and I must point out to people, this does not prevent anything happening it only says it needs the approval of full Council for these things to happen, this is not a block to any of the things in there it just makes it clear that it gets proper democratic consideration to come to a proper democratic decision. On that basis I am happy with what is here I shall be supporting this amendment and I would like to call for a recorded vote on this so that our members can see who is prepared to accept the responsibilities of .....

**Chairman:** Thank you that is fine a recorded vote will be taken. Councillor Bent.

**Councillor Bent:** I actually held Councillor Kings portfolio from 2007 – 2011, and we did actually at that time have a housing strategy and I recognise some of these initiatives as being part of the delivery plan of that housing strategy. A lot of focus has been on incentivising downsizing well we had that initiative in 2007, it worked very well, and we assisted people with their housing costs, there was no great debate about it. So I think it's, to suggest that it's perhaps putting people in a situation they don't want be is just not correct because we found that particular initiative worked very well. I think there is a number of other ones here that have been recycled quite frankly, so they're not new and they have been proven to be effective by the strategy that we had in 2007 – 2011. I think in relation to the last two, dealing with our care homes, I mean that has been an ongoing issue for years quite frankly, we have got care homes that are surplus to requirement and we have to consider alternative uses for them. As far as the land availability is concerned, I think it's only right and proper that these decisions be made by full Council, quite frankly, because it is public land that we are talking about and I think these sort of decisions need to be made collectively, so I very much hope that members will support this amendment. Thank you Chairman.

**Chairman:** Thank you Councillor, I now go to Councillor Steve Darling, you reserved your right.

**Councillor S Darling:** There we are it is actually working. There we are thank you. And I would like to thank Councillor Bye for stealing some of the key points that I wish to raise, I suppose I shouldn't be that surprised that as a former Liberal candidate that he does that for us. I am also, I am just somewhat perplexed as well. You know Gordon says this is a left wing alliance, you know the Conservative group leader and the Liberal Democrat those strange lefties are once again putting forward this. I think there is a simple explanation and we need Gordon, sorry our elected Mayor, to come clean. Clearly Councillor Parrott has talked him in to joining UKIP and that is the only

reasonable explanation as to why he would perceive this Conservative and Liberal Democrat amendment as being a left wing alliance. May I assure you this is actually an alliance of common sense rather than dogma, this is what our community needs and we need to deliver it. Let us not have the scare mongering that we have had before us, may I assure members that, you know, we will not be forcing old people out of homes. This is an incentive that we have had previously it is not a new policy it is reintroducing a policy that ensured older folk had an incentive to downsize to free up existing accommodation for those families in desperate need. May I just refer to the strategy as a whole, it is far from a perfect strategy but we have to use this amendment as a bolt on, to try and make sure that we give it some backbone. May I just briefly allude to the housing landscape that we face in Torbay. We have already heard from Councillor Bye of some of the challenges that we face, but we need to have a look at what is happening at a national level and the fact of the matter is that you know despite, I don't want to get too political, but the fact of the matter is that our current government are not supporting social housing. We have a situation here in Torbay where we have less than half, at 8% the level of social housing so we start from an extremely low base here in Torbay, and the national policy is to actually only help people who want to enter the housing ladder in our low wage economy with high cost of housing that is a deadly cocktail that we face for us. So we have lots of foresight from across the chamber saying that the national policy maybe almost, what I've heard describing as putting the death nail in social housing and yet, we as a Council need to make sure that, more than ever, we hold up our end because we desperately need that to meet the needs of our local community. You know we have already heard how we have gone from being in the top 100, sorry the worst 100 to now you know in the worst 50 according to indices of deprivation and the level of poverty in our community. So more than ever we need to actually tackle the desperate need for affordable housing. You know, I reflect myself, those people who have approached me, you know, I am aware of a family in a certain part of ...

**Chairman:** Thank you Councillor you have thirty seconds.

**Councillor S Darling:** And it's gone off again. There we are. In a certain part of Torquay where they are in desperate need of a five bedroom property, that is almost unimaginable for them to ever find that in Torbay, but the mother has severe health problems and a couple of the children have severe health problems and yet they are overcrowded and it is resulting in problems at school for the children.

**Chairman:** Thank you Councillor you have had your five minutes. Before I move to Councillor King, Councillor .....

**Councillor Haddock:** Thank you Chairman I have finally got noticed. I have no problems with the vast part of the majority of this document. Yes, I have been out of the country, I was not at Conservative group meeting. But I understand the papers I saw come back and this is dumped on us, I will put that word, tonight, with no notice of this motion. Which concerns me when you read the LGA report, doing things properly and professionally to bring things in and I see every other Councillor didn't get documents accept us on the top table. What's going on please? Is it divide and rule by the staff or something? Because I am concerned that we got our documents so late, and couldn't do. Most of that document I have received. I didn't see you, I apologise if you did but I only saw us get them given here. I am concerned that they are all coming this late, it is not professional for us to have documents at the last minute. Most of the document I have no problems with it's the last item

what's been going on on this one, I would like the last item deferred so we can look at legalities, and things like that because I didn't know anything at all about the last item. Thank you Chairman.

**Chairman:** Thank you Councillor, we will now go to Councillor King would you like to comment on the amendment?

**Councillor King:** Thank you everyone for an interesting debate. Just to confirm, the housing strategy presented today has taken on every one, I repeat every one of the Overview and Scrutiny recommendations. Perhaps Overview and Scrutiny are not as thorough as they would have us believe as we have the amendment tabled before us this evening. Councillor Lewis, you're not going to dictate to me what I comment on and what I do not. I am not against affordable housing proposals, far from it. What I am against is being asked to make a decision on a document I had presented to me just a few minutes ago. I saw the document at the Conservative group meeting, or a document at the Conservative group meeting on Monday and before that at a meeting with the Council officers however, the amendment has been substantially reworked after Councillor O'Dwyer helpfully pointed out that the amendment proposals were already out of date. I will not vote against this amendment, simply because I have not had enough time to read it properly and digest its contents, but for the same reason I won't be voting for it.

**Chairman:** Right we are going for a recorded vote, I pass now to the Monitoring Officer

**Anne-Marie Bond:** Members we are going to take a recorded vote on the cross party amendment that's before you. When I call your name please indicate how you wish to vote.....

Members the two thirds requirement was reached the amendment has therefore been carried and becomes the substantive motion against which further amendments can be moved.

**Chairman:** Is there any further debate? Councillor Parrott.

**Councillor Parrott:** ... For a recorded vote, thank you is anybody else going to support that?... Thank you.

**Chairman:** Is there any further debate? Councillor Thomas

**Councillor D Thomas:** Thank you, I really just need to remind members that we have the housing strategy with this amendment now and I would be absolutely horrified if anybody wasn't going to actually support the housing strategy. It is absolutely critical that this Council has a housing strategy, I brought it forward, as I have already said, as a motion all those months ago. Here tonight we now have the housing strategy, there is no option to defer it is actually here so please let's show all councillors supporting the housing strategy that we have on the table in front of us because this is the document that we will be working forward, and I think it would send out a very negative message if the executive were now to either abstain or to vote against the housing strategy that 95% of the work that you guys have done is included, there is only a very small element that has just been added at the end. So let's all get behind your housing strategy and our housing strategy, let's make this the Councils housing strategy and get it adopted unanimously. Thank you.

**Chairman:** Councillor Excell

**Councillor Excell:** Thank you Chair. I'm sorry I don't know what planet you come from but I have already made my point, and I don't see how I can change it I'm afraid that quick so my answer is because at the moment we are having this housing strategy with what your amendment and it still has two issues there which I have concerns about so I will be abstaining.

**Chairman:** Any further debate? Then we go to Councillor Mills who ... Thank you Councillor King, no further comment then we call a recorded vote has been called for.

**Anne-Marie Bond:** So members you are now voting on the substantive motion which includes the amendment, when I call your name please indicate how you wish to vote.....

Members the required two thirds was reached, therefore the housing strategy as amended is carried.