

Thank you Chair, and Councillor Saunders.

I wish to be brief, frankly as it's something that I manage rarely, and this evening seems to be an apt point to try, considering the length of my contribution at Overview and Scrutiny on this issue.

As Members and Cabinet Members will be aware, I spoke at Overview and Scrutiny to propose partial usage of the New Homes Bonus in a Housing capacity; to extend our in house temporary housing provision through the acquisition of property, both to reduce stress on our community in terms of reducing out of area placements, and reduce our ongoing costs both in terms of property acquisition and in long term reduction of costs related to using private providers for temporary accommodation. We will in the future need all forms of accommodation within our portfolio; both individual and larger units, and our residents will benefit from all. I always work alongside Officers, and utilise their knowledge and experience, and I strongly believe that this is, long term, a more cost effective choice than setting aside the New Homes Bonus, which was received in no small part due to the excellent work of Housing and our Empty Homes team in bringing back 252 empty homes into use.

I know that the proposed amendment is socially, logically and financially prudent; I have not been approached by Cabinet to discuss this further, although I always welcome discussion and debate of different approaches and ideas, and as the recording of Overview and Scrutiny has not been uploaded as yet, even though later meetings have, to be certain that my points are understood in the context of this meeting, I need to speak; from a democratic standpoint it would also be helpful to know when the recording of the last Overview and Scrutiny meeting will be uploaded, as many residents use our recordings to follow the workings of our Council, and to have a return to previous business without a public record of the previous business makes our processes unclear and potentially confusing.

I believe strongly in this proposed amendment, and as everyone in this Chamber knows, if I believe in something I work for it, and I fight for it if necessary. I have put in the work on this; and I will continue to. But I hoped not to have to fight for this, because I believe that the vote to take this forward within Overview and Scrutiny, and the acknowledgement of Cabinet that it was sensible to consider it, speaks to its merits.

We have to expand our in house temporary accommodation in all forms, both to help residents and to reduce extensive and expensive future costs. I believe in the strength of my proposal, as I believe the social and economic advantages are clear; I can and will happily argue for them for as long as necessary; but I hoped very much to not have to.

I thank Cabinet for their willingness to consider this proposal and its merits; for I know, without doubt, that they are significant.