

Local Government's Role

Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright OBE

Portfolio Holder for Housing and
Climate Change

East Hampshire District Council

SEEC Board Member



Challenges facing Local Government

- Provision of Affordable Housing with the Localism Bill
- Community Involvement
- Demographics – Ageing Population
- The Green Agenda and standards



Localism Bill

New Realities

Low levels of grant

- Community Planning
- Affordable Rents
- Reduced levels of Housing Benefit
- Use of Private Sector
- Flexible tenancies



Community Planning

- Neighbourhood Planning
- Communities to decide where new houses, businesses and shops should go
- Must be in line with National Policy and strategic vision of LPA
- Be approved by referendum of local people
- Neighbourhood Development Order



Community Right to Build

- Parish Councils propose development
- Community pays the costs of site
- Completed plan assessed by LA as to environmental constraints
- Independent examination
- Referendum needs 50% support
- With NDO in place Community does not need planning permission
- Profits from homes will stay in community similar to Community Land Trust



Community Planning

- How does this affect Local Authorities?
- Need to review how we manage expectations and aspirations of local communities
- How do we hear the hard to reach?
- Saying 'No' to development is not an option if we want sustainable communities
- Will the New Homes Bonus be an incentive?



Affordable Rents

- Maximum 80% of Market rent but could be lower
- Risk of not getting grant if not 80%
- Shift to subsidizing people and not bricks and mortar
- Local Housing Allowance reducing to 30 percentile of open market some areas unaffordable already



Affordable Rents

- Risk in rural areas that those in greatest need and with a strong connection will not be able to afford the homes.
- Role of Local Authorities to set rent strategy even if an LSVT authority
- Rents of adjacent similar properties could be completely different. Will tenants move?
- Will this affect regeneration projects?



Private Sector

- Local Authorities can use Private Sector but will they find Landlords willing to let for 2 years?
- Housing Benefit being paid direct to the landlord should help
- Rents unlikely to reduce following reduction in HB as there is a shortfall of properties to let in the market



Private Sector

- Those just ineligible for HB will have to rely on social rented properties at target rents which will reduce over time with conversion at re-let
- Singles under 35 only eligible for HB for shared accommodation. They may have access to children



Local Authority Duty

- To provide suitable accommodation for all age groups in need
- Households over 65 will make up half the projected growth in households to 2026
- Ageing population will affect all Councils not just those with Social Care responsibilities
- Most Councils don't know enough about costs of ageing population



Needs of Ageing Population

- We need to understand better what older people want
- What is suitable housing for older people?
- No one size fits all
- Solving their aspirations would lead to better use of existing stock
- Do we consult them enough?



Green Building Standards

- Government target to reduce Carbon emissions by 80% by 2050
- 29% reduction in domestic carbon emissions by 2020 on 2008 levels
- Average SAP rating on Social Housing 59 but need to achieve 80 or 81 across the entire stock to achieve 80% target
- Low SAP levels may mean Fuel Poverty



Fuel Poverty

- 17% of Social housing sector in Fuel Poverty and 20% of private rented sector
- 4m households in Fuel Poverty in 2010
- It is rising and could get worse with changes to Housing Benefit



Costs of Improvement

Retrofitting is expensive

- SHAL Housing in Somerset provided
- Insulation, condensing boilers, double glazing, solar thermal panels
- But reductions in average carbon per house is 3.59 tonnes down from 6.43 in 1990
- Less than 50% cut in carbon emissions



Conclusion

Local Authorities are facing huge challenges

- Rising levels of homelessness
- Reduced levels of funding
- Ageing populations
- Expensive Green standards
- Additional layers of complexity to planning

Will the bottom up approach lead to more and better development as the Government hopes?

