

## Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

**Petition Number:** [PE1821](#)

**Main Petitioner:** Darren Cush

**Subject:** Calls on the Parliament to renovate unused buildings to create homes for homeless people.

### Background

#### Homelessness

Councils have statutory duties to assist homeless people and, in most cases, will need to provide homeless people with permanent accommodation. In some cases, this may mean homeless people may have to stay in temporary accommodation before a permanent home is found. Councils have to implement rapid rehousing transition plans. These seek to provide homeless people with permanent accommodation, and any necessary support, quickly. The implementation of these plans is part of the wider Scottish Government [Ending Homelessness Together](#) action plan published in 2018.

Councils have different ways of providing temporary accommodation and allocating permanent housing to homeless people within the legislative framework.<sup>[1]</sup>

#### Funding for affordable housing

The Scottish Government funds new affordable housing through its Affordable Housing Supply Programme. This parliamentary term, the Scottish Government is investing around £1.9bn in this programme with the aim of delivering 50,000 affordable homes.<sup>[2]</sup> Councils and Registered Social Landlords will also invest significant additional funds for new homes. The new affordable homes developed through this funding can also include homes developed through the renovation of derelict properties.

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<sup>[1]</sup> The relevant legislation is the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended

<sup>[2]</sup> The Scottish Government has said that because of the impact of COVID it is unlikely that this target will not be met. <https://www.gov.scot/policies/more-homes/affordable-housing-supply/>

Councils decide how much of this investment is directed at a local level. Plans for new affordable housing in a council area must be set in the context of the council's local housing strategy and wider strategic objectives. Through this strategic approach, councils could prioritise developments, for example, in regeneration areas or town centres which could involve making use of derelict space or buildings.

This would be a matter for councils and their partners to decide. They would need to take into account a wide range of factors when they consider where to develop new housing, or refurbish existing empty properties. These factors include, for example local planning policies, land ownership, cost and access to other services such as health centres and schools.

### **Scottish Government Action**

The Scottish Government's 2018 *Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan* sets the direction for change towards ending homelessness. The Minister for Local Government and Housing asked the Housing and Rough Sleepers Action Group (HARSAG) (who made recommendations for the action plan) to reconvene in June 2020 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The [Group's recommendations](#) were wide ranging, and included emergency and longer term measures, and were accepted by the Scottish Government. Work is underway to implement those recommendations.

### **Scottish Parliament Action**

The Local Government and Communities Committee has considered the issue of homelessness in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, most recently at its meeting of [14 August 2020](#).

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**15 September 2020**

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