

## Place and Resources Overview Committee – 9 February 2023

### Agenda item 5 - Public Participation

#### Statement relating to agenda item 7 – Council tax premiums on second homes and empty properties

##### Statement from Tony Tuck – Secretary of the Lyme Regis Beach Hut, Caravan and Chalet Owners' Association

As the Secretary of the Association for chalet owners in Lyme Regis I write in response to this Dorset Cabinet Paper asking you to ensure that you exclude from your consideration of the 200% surcharge on 'second homes' the wooden chalets around the Cobb and Monmouth Beach in Lyme Regis.

In particular, I suggest that you must find a definition of "second home" better than that contained in your Paper, which defines a "home" in terms of being "home" i.e.

*"a second **home** is defined as a privately-owned habitable accommodation that is not occupied by anyone as their main residence. It may be occupied occasionally, for example as a holiday **home**....." (My **bold** highlight)*

The wooden chalets on Monmouth Beach can never be used as a home for they all have **an obligatory period of non-occupation**, as recognised by your council tax department. Most chalets can only be occupied between the 1<sup>st</sup> of March and the 7<sup>th</sup> of November in any one year, though a few do have extended leases enabling occupation until the 7<sup>th</sup> of January following.

Moreover, any concept of 'home' has to include an element of permanence. The chalet site is subject to a rolling 5 year temporary planning permission – which could be rescinded at any time.

**By definition a 'home' must be a residence in which occupation can be experienced continuously without any obligatory and legal period of non-occupation.**

**I ask you to ensure that any decision that you take makes it crystal clear that these wooden chalets are excluded from the coverage of any proposed surcharge on genuine second homes.**

By way of background information you should be aware that the Monmouth Beach chalets have traditionally been owned by local people. Many are in third or fourth generation ownership and a genuine community has prevailed over the years. They are traditionally heavily occupied during summer months and, because they are mainly akin to wooden sheds and rarely, save only when rebuilt, conform to any semblance of building regulation, are not habitable during the winter months, even were it to be permitted.

Also, these chalets do not in any way detract from the local housing stock, because of the obligatory period of non-occupation, they do not take homes away from local people, they do not impact on the external pressure to increase the price of genuine homes in the area, and they cannot be used as a short term solution for homeless families.

The recent tendency following a sale of a chalet has increased the number of chalets that may become 'buy to let'. This not only degrades any sense of community, but would be counterproductive for Dorset Council in that owners would cease to be council tax payers and instead be business rate payers, a lesser or zero amount of income.

I do hope that you agree that any definition of "second home" must exclude any dwelling where there is an obligatory period of non-occupation, such as the wooden chalets at Monmouth Beach.