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Councillor criticised for rough sleepers comment



PA MEDIA

The Scarborough borough area, which includes Whitby, had the highest rate of homelessness for any area in Yorkshire last year, according to Shelter

Anttoni Numminen

Local Democracy Reporting Service

A housing charity has criticised a North Yorkshire councillor for suggesting that some people "like sleeping rough".

Conservative John Nock made the comments at a meeting of Whitby Town Council earlier this month.

He later appeared to row back on the remarks, saying "elect" might have been a more appropriate word than "like".

The charity Shelter said: "No one is on the streets because they like sleeping rough."

Speaking at a meeting on 9 January, Mr Nock said that "there may be a good reason" for people being rough sleepers, adding: "**We know there are those who just like sleeping rough anyway.**"

He added that the public should "notify the police on 101" if they see rough sleepers, so they can take action "either for their own protection or the safety of anyone else", according to the **Local Democracy Reporting Service**.

Mr Nock later clarified that "perhaps 'elect' would have been a better word than 'like'".

'Failure of housing policy'

Polly Neate, Chief Executive of Shelter, said: "Let's be clear: no one is living on the streets because they like sleeping rough and you cannot criminalise people who have nowhere else to go.

"Homelessness happens when housing policy fails and boils down to people not being able to afford somewhere to live. No one who is homeless should be punished for a failure of policy."

In response, Mr Nock said that while not on the agenda at the town council meeting, housing policy was "frequently brought into discussion at council meetings".

He added that the police initiative he was speaking on "is in place to help [homeless people] find safe and secure accommodation".

Research by Shelter has found that the Scarborough borough area, which includes Whitby, had the highest rate of homelessness for any area in Yorkshire last year.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cv2wpg5qyxdo>