

NOTICE OF MOTION – CLLR K DAVIS – HOUSING ALLOCATIONS

Executive Summary

At its meeting on 31 March 2022, the Council referred the following Notice of Motion to the Executive.

Councillor K Davis

“It is vitally important that our residents directly benefit from new housing development in their local area. The Council already requires a 2-year local connection for applicants joining its Housing Register for affordable homes, as well as expecting any shared ownership homes secured through the Section 106 process to be first marketed to those living or working in the Borough.

However, the Council should consider going further in promoting a “Local First” approach by:

- Investigating any further flexibilities that could be incorporated into the Housing Allocations Policy to prioritise local residents;
- Exclusively marketing any new homes built and sold by Thamesway for a set period of time to residents living in that Ward or Neighbourhood Area;
- Considering a local connection policy for any new homes delivered under the Government’s new “First Homes” tenure that prioritises residents living in that Ward or Neighbourhood Area before opening up to the Borough.”

Officer Comment

“Woking Borough Council has a target to deliver 292 new homes per annum and it is important that local residents directly benefit from the extra housing and associated infrastructure. The Motion aligns with the Council’s Housing Strategy objective ‘to provide well designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs’. Other central Government policies have sought to localise the benefits of housing development to local communities, including through the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans and top-slicing a neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support local projects.

This Notice of Motion seeks to build on the localism agenda by further prioritising local residents applying for social housing. The Council’s Housing Allocations policy already requires applicants to have lived or worked in the Borough for at least 2 years (with some limited exceptions) and includes provisions for the use of Local Lettings Plan, which is a similar approach to that proposed by the Motion. By law, the Council’s allocations scheme must give priority to applicants in ‘Reasonable Preference Categories’, including homeless applicants in priority need. Any review of the Allocations Policy to increase local connection criteria will need to ensure this does not adversely impact applicants in the ‘reasonable preference categories’, as well as, ensuring that it does not discriminate certain groups.

The Council is currently reviewing its Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to take into account changes in central Government policy. Among these changes is a new “First Homes” low cost home ownership scheme for first-time buyers. The draft SPD is likely to include local connection criteria specifically for ‘First Homes’ delivered in the Borough for the first three months from when a home is first marketed. A tightening of the local connection criteria to a Ward or Neighbourhood Area level could be explored through the SPD review, which would be subject to consultation with stakeholders (i.e. developers, residents, Neighbourhood Forums, etc.).

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Any proposals to exclusively market new homes built and sold by Thamesway for a set period of time to residents living in that Ward or Neighbourhood Area would need to be agreed by the company boards. Thamesway is starting to formulate its business plans for 2023/24 onwards, which will come to Council for approval, and this proposal could be considered as part of this business planning process.

Officers are supportive of the intent of the Notice of Motion and will continue to work with the Portfolio Holder to seek to ensure that residents directly benefit from new housing development in their local area.”

Background Papers:	None.
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