

Chairman's Announcement

FWP item: More affordable homes to rent and buy

The Chairman met with Cllr Clewer, Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism and Nicole Smith, Head of Housing Operations, for a briefing for the item previously listed on the Committee's FWP as 'More affordable homes to rent and buy' on 4 April 2018.

The Briefing explained that the Council has a statutory duty to provide a housing register and this is facilitated through 'Homes 4 Wiltshire'. If a Housing Association has housing stock within the County, then this housing provider can become a partner Housing Association of Wiltshire Council. Effectively, this means that this Housing Association must then abide by Wiltshire's housing allocations process, however, the Housing Association is entitled to their own lettings policies; which the Council has no control over.

Most partner Housing Associations have housing stock in other Local Authority areas (apart from Wiltshire). The result of this is that Housing Associations tend to have different lettings policies to Wiltshire's policies and this is because, as the Housing Association is present in a number of Local Authority areas, it would be too difficult for them to have to amend their policies per area and thus, they tend to adopt one over-arching lettings policy, which could naturally be different to the Council's lettings policy.

Due to changes in Government legislation and grant conditions, there are now very limited - if any - connections between the Council and partner Housing Associations. In regard to allocations of affordable housing, 25% of the Associations' stock can be allocated independently by the Housing Association, 75% of stock has to be allocated through Wiltshire's housing register (Homes 4 Wiltshire) and 100% of all affordable new build.

As a result of this legislation, the Council is unable to exercise much control over affordable housing. The Council's agenda is to continue to develop positive relationships with its partner Housing Associations in the pursuit of resolving issues in the best interest of the resident, e.g. eviction notices.

Following the discussion, the Chairman felt that the item listed on the FWP as 'More affordable homes to rent and buy' ought to be removed; as the Council is unable to influence the individual policies of each of the Council's partner Housing Associations, however, it is hoped that this Announcement would help to provide background to this decision for the Committee.