

LOCAL ESSENTIAL WORKERS DEFINITION

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 18 September 2018

Report of Chief Planning Officer

Status For Comment

Key Decision No

Executive Summary: To provide comment on the Local Essential Worker Definition so that it may be refined for inclusion within the Local Plan and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and consulted upon.

This Report supports the Key Aim of the Community Plan Priorities 2016-19 and Housing Strategy: ‘Wellbeing Starts at Home’ (2017).

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer Gavin Missons, Ext. 7332

Recommendation to Housing and Health Advisory Committee: That the report and information be noted.

Reason for Recommendation: To enable the District Council to improve local affordable housing options for those key to local services.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Intelligence gathered from the Survey of Employers’ Housing Needs in 2017 identified the need for essential worker housing in the District. Such housing would give local essential workers a range of housing options. This would help to ensure that the District had a more sustainable economy by attracting and retaining businesses and employment through the provision of affordable housing for those workers providing essential services to the community.
- 2 A Local Essential Worker Housing Policy is therefore being drafted. It is proposed that this should form part of the suite of policies to accompany the Local Plan and Affordable Housing SPD. The Policy would provide a local definition of what constitutes an essential worker and set out which forms of affordable housing essential worker applicants could access.
- 3 The starting point has been to develop a local definition of an essential worker. This is based on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

definition, together with specific intelligence gathered from the Survey of Employers' Housing Needs.

Proposed 'Local Essential Worker' Definition

- 4 A 'Local Essential Worker' is proposed as someone employed in the District and in one of the following occupations:
 - Public sector employees providing frontline services in areas including health, education and community safety and can include NHS staff, teachers, police, firefighters, military personnel, social care and childcare workers (as per NPPF definition);
 - District Council employees who provide frontline services;
 - Private sector employees and the self-employed providing frontline services in care and includes teachers, health care, social care and childcare workers;
 - Private sector employees and the self-employed who provide frontline services in amenities and includes cleaners, kitchen/catering staff, shop workers, hairdressers, local transport and agriculture; and
 - Any other frontline occupational group experiencing recruitment or retention issues - such issues being first evidenced to the satisfaction of the District Council and inclusion as local essential workers at the sole discretion of the District Council.

- 5 A 'Local Essential Worker' would be deemed to be employed in the following circumstances:
 - In paid full or part-time permanent employment for 16 hours or more per week; or
 - Working in the District on a temporary or zero-hour employment contract that has been in place for at least 6-months and can demonstrate they have worked at least 16-hours per week since starting the employment contract;
 - A permanent job offer which they have accepted and meets the above criteria;
 - The employment would have to be the actual place of work in the District and not employment based on a head office or regional office situated in the District but from which they did not work. For those with a caseload or have a roving remit (e.g. district nurses, social workers, police officers etc), the applicant would need to obtain written confirmation from their employer that a substantial amount of their day-to-day duty fell within the District;
 - For the self-employed, if the employment required the worker to work outside of the District from time to time, they would be required to

demonstrate that their permanent base of operations was within the District.

- 6 Applicants would need provide documentary evidence to the District Council or housing provider to confirm that the work or job offer was genuine and appropriate evidence could include:
- A contract of employment; and/or
 - Wage/salary slips or bank statements covering the last three-months.

Conclusions

Members are asked to consider the proposed 'Local Essential Worker' definition and provide comment so that the policy can be finalised for inclusion in the Local Plan and Affordable Housing SPD - and in readiness for consultation planned for the end of the year.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial issues to consider.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal issues to consider.

Equality Assessment

The decision recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Appendices None

Background Papers Survey of Employers' Housing Needs (2017)
https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/1029/survey_of_employers_housing_needs
Housing Strategy: Wellbeing Starts at Home (2017)
https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/1028/housing_strategy_2017

Affordable Housing SPD (2011)

https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069129/current_local_plan/259/supplementary_planning_documents_and_other_guidance

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