

# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

## OFFICER DECISION REPORT

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>SELF BUILD &amp; CUSTOM HOUSEBUILDING REGISTER FEES</b>			
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To set out the rationale for a reduction of the charging fees (both entry and annual renewal) for inclusion on the Council's Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register.			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>That the Strategic Director of Place (as delegated Para B1.2) agree to:</b> <b>a) Reduce the charging fees for joining the Council's Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register, as follows:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• reduce the charge for joining the register for Part 1 to £25,</li><li>• reduce the charge for joining the register for Part 2 to £10,</li><li>• remove the annual fee for applicants to remain on the Register.</li></ul>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Chair of the Environment Committee, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.			
<b>Report Author</b>	Laura Stephen Senior Housing Strategy and Enabling Officer Email: <a href="mailto:laura.stephen@stroud.gov.uk">laura.stephen@stroud.gov.uk</a>			
<b>Options</b>	None			
<b>Background Papers</b>	None			
<b>Appendices</b>	None			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	No	No

### 1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The introduction of a local connection test and a fee for new applicants to join the Council's Custom and Self Build Register, together with the introduction of an annual retention fee for renewal of applications, was approved by the Environment Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Delegated authority was granted to the Head of Development Services to set the introductory fee and the annual renewal fee for remaining on Part 1 of the Register thereafter. The Council supports the provision of self build housing as identified in the District's Housing Strategy and Local Plan.

- 1.2** The introduction of a local connection test meant that the CSB Register was split into two parts. Part 1, for those applicants who meet the locally set eligibility criteria; and Part 2 for those who meet the national eligibility criteria but do not meet the local eligibility criteria.
- 1.3** Following the introduction of the local connection test it became necessary only for the Council to provide 'suitable development permissions' (planning permission or planning permission in principle for a serviced plot of land) to meet the demand from applicants on Part 1 of the CSB Register (plus existing applicants at the time of introduction) within three years of the conclusion of each base period. The Council would still need to 'have regard' to the number of people on Part 2 of the CSB Register in carrying out planning and other functions.
- 1.4** The current fees for applicants seeking to join and remain on the CSB Register are:  
 £75 for entry onto Part 1 of the Register;  
 £25 for entry onto Part 2;  
 £25 annual fee for applicants to remain on the Register.  
 (Government regulations provide the local authority the ability to charge a fee for applications to the CSB Register to cover reasonable costs incurred by the local authorities in maintaining the CSB Register and in delivering permissions for serviced plots to meet the need and demand on the CSB Register)
- 1.5** All applicants registered before the introduction of local eligibility criteria and charging fees on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017 were not required to pay a joining fee and automatically joined Part 1 of the CSB Register.
- 1.6** A review has been undertaken in order to better understand the impact of the current charging fees.

## **2. CUSTOM AND SELF-BUILD HOUSEBUILDING REGISTER REVIEW**

The duty to keep a Custom and Self-build Housebuilding Register has been a legislative requirement of the Council since 1st April 2016. Entries on the Stroud District Council CSB Register are intended to help the Council assess demand for this type of housing locally, and inform its work on shaping future planning and housing policy for the district.

- 2.1** To date the Stroud District Council CSB has received a total of 170 entries as follows:

Number of households registered			
Base period	Date period	Part 1	Part 2
1	1st April 2016 - 30th October 2016	48	N/A
2	31st October 2016 - 30th October 2017	112	N/A
3	31st October 2017 - 30th October 2018	2	0
4	31st October 2018 - 30th October 2019	7	1
5	31st October 2019 - 30th October 2020	Nil to date	Nil to date

- 2.2** Following the introduction of the new charging fees on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017 the Council notified those already on the register that as they joined the register prior to the introduction of local eligibility criteria they had automatically been placed onto Part 1 of the register and if they wished to remain on the register for the forthcoming year (from 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018) they were required to pay the annual retention fee.
- 2.3** Of the 160 households already on the CSB Register when charging fees were introduced only 6 households chose to pay the annual renewal fee.
- 2.4** We have only had 10 households join the register since the charging fees have been in place.
- 2.5** Feedback on the Local Plan Policy indicates that charging fees are creating a deterrent for people wishing to join and retain their entry on the CSB Register. Other Local Authorities across the Country that have introduced charging fees have also experienced a decline in the number of households joining the CSB Register.
- 2.6** The Council's Local Plan Policies for bringing forward self build development in the District require evidence of appropriate demand.
- 2.7** In light of some of the perceived challenges with the current charging fees, it is proposed that the charging fees are amended as follows:
- £25 for entry onto Part 1 of the Register;
  - £10 for entry onto Part 2
  - No annual fee for applicants to remain on the Register

## **CONCLUSION**

It is considered that by reducing the initial joining fees and removing the annual fee for applicants to remain on the CSB Register, this will attract more applicants who are interested in Self-build and Custom Housebuilding to join and remain on the Register.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

There are no significant financial implications to the Council as a direct result of this report. The cost of administering the CSB Register will be met from any fees paid by applicants seeking to join the CSB Register and the service budget.

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## **Legal Implications**

Section 1 of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 places a duty on relevant authorities (defined in that section) to keep and publicise a register of individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to acquire a serviced plot of land in the authority's area in order to build houses for those individuals to occupy as their homes. The ability to apply a local connection test and charge a fee is discretionary.

The duty to provide sufficient development permissions to meet demand for self-build and custom housebuilding introduced by the 2016 Regulations is mandatory.

It is within the Strategic Directors delegations to approve this change of approach and the decision is being publicised in line with the arrangements being operated by the Council during the Covid emergency.

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## **Equality Implications**

As the proposal seeks to only amend the existing fees for joining and retaining entry on the CSB Register an equality impact assessment has not been considered necessary

## **Environmental Implications**

As the proposal seeks to only amend the existing fees for joining and retaining entry on the CSB Register an environmental impact assessment has not been considered necessary.