

ITEM 5.2 ADMINISTRATOR'S MINUTE NO 13/2016 - AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

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ATTACHMENTS NIL

BACKGROUND

There has been growing media coverage about the importance of affordable housing in Sydney. For many residents in our community home ownership is currently out of reach. In addition, an increasing proportion of households who are purchasing or renting in the Council area are suffering housing stress (i.e. spending more than 30% of their weekly income on housing costs).

In speaking with residents and business owners, the financial challenges faced by many people who wish to live and work on the Northern Beaches are clear. In particular the challenges facing young people, and key workers such as nurses and carers, police officers, teachers and emergency workers, who provide some of the most important services to our community, but are often the lowest paid. Local employers have also told me about the difficulty in attracting and retaining employees due to the cost of housing in the area and the difficulties faced by workers commuting long distances from outside the Council area.

I acknowledge the work undertaken by the former Manly, Pittwater and Warringah Council's in the development of approaches to address the housing affordability issue. Northern Beaches Council is determined to include affordable housing in the development of the Ingleside release area and the Northern Beaches Hospital precinct. These projects have been, and remain, the focus of negotiations with the Department of Planning and Environment as they provide the best opportunity for a quantum increase in the provision of affordable housing on the Northern Beaches in the short term.

On a broader scale, the reluctance of the Department of Planning and Environment to consider the inclusion of the Northern Beaches Council in State Environmental Planning Policy 70 - Affordable Housing, thereby enabling the mandating of requirements for affordable housing within a Local Environmental Plan, has been a disappointment and a significant barrier to the creation of additional affordable housing in the area.

However, the recent release of draft District Plans by the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC), and public statements by Minister Stokes on affordable housing, are encouraging signs that a whole-of-government approach to affordable housing is now being considered. The draft District Plans specify an affordable housing target of up to 10% in land release and urban renewal areas, and there is a clear indication that the GSC intends to play a greater role in developing more detailed targets for individual councils.

This is a welcome development. More work must be done to test the feasibility of even higher affordable housing targets given the scale of the issue and the growing needs of our community.

PROPOSAL

An affordable housing policy for the Northern Beaches is a high priority for this Council. I propose that Council staff work with the Affordable Housing Strategic Reference Group, to develop a new policy for the Northern Beaches.

The policy should, amongst other things, address the following matters:

- Targets for the provision of affordable housing in the Northern Beaches.
- Possible amendments to Council's land use planning strategies, plans and policies to promote affordable housing and a mix of dwelling types, including bonus provisions, car parking requirements, and fees and charges.

- The role of Council as an exemplar for affordable housing.
- Partnership opportunities with State Government and Community Housing Providers to deliver and manage affordable rental housing on Council's behalf.
- The delivery of affordable housing through Voluntary Planning Agreements.
- Council's advocacy role.
- Organisational and financial systems required to manage affordable housing delivered to Council through new planning requirements.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- A. Work with the Affordable Housing Strategic Reference Group to develop an Affordable Housing policy for endorsement by Council.
 - B. Consult with relevant State Government departments and other stakeholders regarding the development of an Affordable Housing policy.
 - C. Prepare a report within three (3) months outlining the progress of this matter.
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Dick Persson
ADMINISTRATOR