

**North Tyneside Council
Report to Council
Date: 14 March 2013**

ITEM 6

Title: Motions

Notice has been received of the following motions from Members of the Council to be put to the Council meeting.

1. Motion signed by Councillors Jim Allan, John O Shea, Carole Gambling and Lesley Spillard

The very recent Planning Appeal that caused the council to withdraw from the appeal altogether as a consequence of information coming to light at a very late stage, in fact the evening before the appeal was to be held, so placing the council in a very difficult position both financially and also the risk of the appeal process.

Council therefore resolves that an urgent review be taken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee into how the planning application was processed, the information that was submitted and considered by Officers and Planning committee members. Including the analysis of evidence and preparation for the planning Inspectors Appeal hearing. A report should be produced by Overview and Scrutiny and presented to the full council for consideration and discussion.

2. Motion signed by Councillors Jim Allan, John O Shea, Carole Gambling and Lesley Spillard

In light of the result of the planning appeal on the Scaffold Hill proposals earlier this week we request Cabinet to prioritise the flood prevention work to clear the water course in a westerly direction from the culvert adjacent to Dukes pond to the culvert in the area of Bradford Av across the back of Aysgarth Av, Acomb Av and Canterbury Av in order to prevent the escalation of the flooding problems which already exist and could be exaggerated by the proposals of the scaffold hill development.

3. Motion signed by Councillors Jim Allan, John O Shea, Carole Gambling and Lesley Spillard

Bedroom Tax

That Cabinet be requested to urgently review the impact of the bedroom tax on council housing tenants and investigate the potential of reclassifying the size of our council houses, which could minimise some of the impact of the bedroom tax on some of our tenants. Also that Cabinet consider making representations to the relevant Housing Minister to urgently review the impact of the bedroom tax on social housing tenants and reverse the legislation to avoid unnecessary stress on a great many people.

(Please note that Knowsley Housing Trust has made a key decision to reclassify the size of 600 homes as part of the mitigation of the impact of the bedroom tax.)

The Knowsley [Housing](#) Trust is to reclassify nearly 600 family homes as smaller properties. This will exempt tenants from having their [housing benefit](#) reduced under the so-called 'bedroom tax', a component of the government's [welfare](#) reform agenda, but there were other important reasons for taking this step.

Knowsley regularly reviews the sustainability of neighbourhoods to take account of changing demographics, tenant feedback, antisocial behaviour and local demand, and to anticipate future [investment](#) and maintenance needs.

It had become increasingly apparent that demand for the two- and three-bedroom flats and maisonettes was virtually non-existent.

These flats had been designed to accommodate families with young children, yet they no longer provided a suitable contemporary home for this type of household. Rather than having empty homes blight our neighbourhoods we have instead offered these homes to single people and couples without children.

After [seeking legal advice](#), we now intend to re-classify these homes while ensuring that the existing households continue to live there. The reclassification will take place from 1 April and rents will be reduced accordingly.

Although this decision has been reached independently of the work we are doing to protect our tenants from the negative impact of welfare reform, tenants in these properties who would have been classed as under-occupying under the new bedroom tax rules, will directly benefit from these changes.

Unlike most other housing associations, we took the decision to limit rent increases for the past two years. This was to protect our tenants from rising prices and changes brought about by welfare reform, and to try and keep as much disposable income as possible in tenants' pockets and within the local economy. By setting rents well below the maximum we estimate we are saving tenants an average of £109 – and the housing benefit bill around £1.2m a year.

The decision to reclassify these properties will cost us £250,000 a year in rental income, but our [business plan](#) has fully accounted for this together with smaller rent increases.

It is a delicate balancing act to manage a housing provider at this time. We must ensure that the association remains financially viable so it may continue to provide the vital services so many people rely on. But we must also find ways to support our tenants, many of whom face financial difficulty while living in one of the most economically challenged parts of the country.

Sheila Tolley is executive director of customers and communities at [Knowsley Housing Trust](#)

4. Motion signed by Councillors Jim Allan, John O Shea, Carole Gambling and Lesley Spillard

Trading Company

In light of the recent proposals made in the Cabinet's budget proposals: we would ask that council be provided with information relating to the formation of the Trading Company and the risk implications for Council. A report should include the membership of the board of Directors, the business case, the Financial Strategy, including the projected £250,000 income that was included the Cabinet's Budget proposals. The Organisational Chart including employees and their work location. The report would then allow council to be able to discuss the value for money of the Trading Company and the other benefits that it may bring to the Council.