

Tory councillor criticises 'property developers' influence' on party's choice of election candidates

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Councillor Paul Church: 'The local Conservative Association in Westminster has different rules to the rest of the UK, which means you don't have to live in the ward to join the local committee. So lots of developer reps tend to join them'

PROPERTY developers are influencing executive committees that pick Conservative candidates standing for election, a councillor has claimed.

Westminster's Conservative Association rules differ from the national party regulations that bar outsiders from sitting on local selection committees.

The set-up in Westminster has allowed "reps" of property developers to vote for candidates, according to Paul Church, an outgoing Conservative councillor who has represented West End ward since 2014.

He said on Twitter: "The local Conservative Association in Westminster has different rules to the rest of the UK, which means you don't have to live in the ward to join the local committee. So lots of developer reps tend to join them.

"I've always thought they should adopt the national rules."

Cllr Church decided not to stand again in May after becoming increasingly disillusioned with his party on a local level, and with what he saw as the sway of property developers over elected councillors.

He has had messages of praise from the Labour group leader Cllr Adam Hug, although support from Conservative leader Nickie Aiken has been noticeably absent.

The Westminster Conservative Association did not respond to requests for comment.