

HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 21 MARCH 2012

DECISIONS

Set out below is a summary of the decisions taken at the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on Wednesday, 21 March 2012. Decisions made by the Portfolio Holder will be subject to call-in. Recommendations made to the Cabinet or to the Council are not subject to call-in. The wording used does not necessarily reflect the actual wording that will appear in the minutes.

If you have any queries about any matters referred to in this decision sheet please contact Ian Senior.

1. HOUSING STRATEGY

The Housing Portfolio Holder approved the Housing Strategy 2012-16.

Other Options Considered: The Housing Portfolio Holder is requested to consider the Housing Strategy and the proposed actions and to suggest changes or additions where required.

1. **Reason For Decision:** Local authorities are required to have a Housing Strategy that sets out a clear vision for housing in its area for providing leadership, planning and delivery to:
 - Assess and plan for the current and future housing needs of the local population across all tenures
 - Make best use of the existing housing stock
 - Plan and facilitate new supply
 - Plan and commission housing support services which link homes to support and other services that people need to live in them; and
 - Work in partnership to secure effective and neighbourhood management.
2. Without an up to date Strategy, the Council could be criticised for not being clear on its housing vision and key aims.

2. EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

The Housing Portfolio Holder approved the Empty Homes Strategy 2012-16.

3. **Other Options Considered:** The Housing Portfolio Holder is requested to consider the Empty Homes Strategy and the proposed actions and to suggest changes or additions where required.
4. The Action Plan in Appendix A of the Strategy identifies how we will improve our evidence base of empty homes, be more pro-active in bringing empty homes back into use and improving the information and advice given to owners of empty properties. This will be monitored quarterly and reported on an annual basis to the Housing Portfolio Holder as part of the Affordable Homes performance monitoring.

Reason For Decision: The new Empty Homes Strategy aims to bring together the key departments within the Council to work together towards reducing the number of empty homes in the district through joint working and implementation of the Action Plan.

3 TENANCY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Housing Portfolio Holder approved in principle for further development the Tenancy Policy, including:

1. Tenancies for older people and disabled people

To offer flexible tenancies for a fixed period of 10 years.

2. Tenancies for all other people

To offer flexible tenancies for a fixed period of 10 years.

3. Introductory tenancies – giving landlords the opportunity to present the tenant with a trial period. If there are any problems associated with an introductory tenancy, the landlord may obtain possession by a court order after following due process, and it is not required to prove any grounds for possession. These tenancies are seen as a fast track tool to deal with anti-social behaviour.

To introduce 12 month introductory tenancies to all new tenants.

4. Succession Rights

Right to succeed to a tenancy on the death of a tenant

To allow only one succession for spouses and partners but with safeguards in place to protect the vulnerable.

Other Options Considered: The key matters for decision are set out in table 1 below. Appendix A provides a more detailed assessment of the pros and cons of each of these options.

Table 1 – Key Options

	Option A	Option B
5. Tenancies for older people and disabled people	To retain secure 'lifetime' tenancies for all offers of housing to older people and disabled people	To offer flexible tenancies for a fixed period of 10 years.
6. Tenancies for all other people	To continue to offer secure 'lifetime' tenancies for all other people.	To discontinue offering secure 'lifetime' tenants and offer flexible tenancies for a fixed period of 10 years. Twelve months before the end of the flexible tenancy we will commence the review process. Tenants will not be asked to move unless suitable alternative accommodation that meets their needs can be offered.
7. Introductory tenancies Introductory tenancies give landlords the opportunity to present the	Not to introduce introductory tenancies	To introduce introductory tenancies to all new tenants except those transferring internally

<p>tenant with a trial period. If there are any problems associated with an introductory tenancy, the landlord may obtain possession by a court order after following due process, and it is not required to prove any grounds for possession. These tenancies are seen as a fast track tool to deal with anti-social behaviour.</p>		<p>where they previously held a secure tenancy or those transferring from an external provider where they previously a secure or assured tenancy.</p>
<p>8. Succession Rights Right to succeed to a tenancy on the death of a tenant</p>	<p>To maintain the status quo for succession, allowing qualifying family members provided they meet the appropriate criteria</p>	<p>To allow only one succession for spouses and partners</p>

Introductory tenancies can be used whether the tenancy type is a secure lifetime tenancy or a flexible fixed term tenancy.

4. WILLINGHAM: ACCESS OVER BRICKHILLS - SALE PRICE OF EASEMENT

The Housing Portfolio Holder confirmed his decision made on Wednesday 15 February 2012 to transfer Title to the land shaded on the plan attached to the original agenda report and defined as vehicular access over SCDC land, for £136,800 (One hundred and thirty six thousand eight hundred pounds), subject to an overage provision to protect the Council's future interests and to payment of South Cambridgeshire District Council's legal costs by the applicant, *unless* the applicant is able to negotiate a lower price for the site from the landowners. The price of the easement, in this case, will be reduced to 25% (subject to an absolute minimum of £120,000) of the lowest price offered by the landowners. This offer will stand for a period of six months, to terminate on Friday 21 September 2012.

Other Options Considered: None specified

Reason For Decision: The price of £136,800 is based on the independent valuation of the site by Pocock & Shaw. This decision reflects a reduced valuation by Pocock & Shaw of £152,000 (from the original £200,000) which takes account of the costs of developing this scheme. A further 10% reduction has been allowed to further reflect the contribution of 6 affordable homes as part of the development and in recognition of the marginal nature of the viability for this scheme. A further reduction in the price of the easement will be agreed only if the applicant negotiates a lower price for the land, in order to secure viability for the scheme.

5. ALLOCATION OF ACCOMMODATION: CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The Housing Portfolio Holder approved the letter attached to the agenda report as the Council's response to the CLG draft guidance.

5. **Other Options Considered:** The Portfolio Holder is invited to comment on the draft consultation response.

6. The formal guidance from the CLG is to be published during 2012. Once this has been received a revised local Tenancy Policy will be presented to the Portfolio holder for decision.

Reason For Decision: None specified

6. SINGLE EQUALITIES SCHEME

The Housing Portfolio Holder approved the Single Equalities Scheme 2012-2015.

Other Options Considered: The Portfolio Holder may agree, amend or reject the Single Equality Scheme as presented, bearing in mind that the Council has a legal obligation to publish one or more equality objectives by 06 April 2012.

Reason For Decision: To make sure that South Cambridgeshire District Council complies fully with the Equality Act 2010. Previously, the Portfolio Holder has endorsed Disability, Gender and Race Equality Schemes for the Council. A new Single Equality Scheme has been developed in response to the Equality Act 2010, which supersedes all previously endorsed Equality Schemes; and brings together our statutory requirement to publish Equality Objectives by 06 April 2012.