

## HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 13 JUNE 2012

### DECISIONS

Set out below is a summary of the decisions taken at the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on Wednesday, 13 June 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. **GYPSY & TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT - INTERNAL REVIEW**

The Housing Portfolio Holder approved the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment as part of the evidence base to inform Council planning framework (Option A in the report) subject to the correction to the cumulative total of new pitches estimated for South Cambridgeshire, taking the forward projection of future need from the year 2021 down from 47 pitches to 20 pitches.

##### **Options Considered:**

##### ***Option A***

To accept the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment as part of the evidence base to inform Council planning framework providing the correction to the cumulative total of new pitches estimated for South Cambridgeshire is noted, taking the forward projection of future need from 2021 to 20 pitches down from 47.

##### ***Option B***

If the Council does not wish to accept this study then it still has a requirement in law to have an up to date reassessment of accommodation needs for Gypsy and Travellers in the district. The only option would therefore be to commission a separate independent study. This would have the disadvantage of:

Adding delay to the completion of the Council's planning policy development and leaving the Council vulnerable to successful legal challenge.

Would cost at least £6000 to re run a desk top exercise. A full primary research study could cost at least £14,000.

Is likely to return a similar figure given the same statistical data sets as the study already completed.

There would be a disparity across the sub region as the other local authorities have already adopted the County Council led Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment.

**Reason For Decision:** Option B would cause further delay, could cost at least £14,000 and was likely to come up with a similar result, given the same data sets as the study already completed. The other eight local authorities across the region had already adopted the study conducted by Cambridgeshire County Council.

**2. MELBOURN: GARAGE TO THE REAR OF CAR PARK, HIGH STREET**

The Housing Portfolio Holder agreed to extend the long lease of the car park at High Street, Melbourn to Melbourn Parish Council to include the garage site to the rear of the car park, subject to Melbourn Parish Council contributing 50% of the cost of demolition and clearance or £3,000 (whichever is the lesser, South Cambridgeshire District Council meeting its own legal costs, and the terms of the lease remaining the same as they were before.

**Other Options Considered:** Retain the garage site in South Cambridgeshire District Council ownership and consider refurbishment or replacement.

**Reason For Decision:** South Cambridgeshire District Council would no longer be liable for maintaining the garage block or managing garage lettings, and refurbishment of the site by the Parish Council and extension to the car park will greatly improve the appearance of the area.

**3. INTERIM AMENDMENTS TO THE LETTINGS POLICY**

The Housing Portfolio Holder agreed to the amendments to the lettings policy to take immediate effect to enable:

- (a) **Option A** - Applicants to bid on the appropriate size of property for their household in line with the LHA criteria.
- (b) **Option C** - The Council to treat all properties (except those specially identified as sheltered housing or housing for people of pensionable age) as general needs accommodation without any age criteria/ restrictions.

**Options Considered:**

A - To agree to the proposed interim amendments, to enable the Council to minimise the number of new tenants entering social rented accommodation that will have their housing benefit restricted due to the LHA size criteria being applied to these properties from April 2013.

B - To continue to allocate using our existing matching policy only, until a full review of the lettings policy has been concluded and consultation has taken place. This will mean we are offering some households no option but to bid on properties they may not be able to afford after April 2013.

C - To remove all age restrictions on properties (other than those designated for the elderly) to help address the high demand, in particular for one and two bedroom properties.

D - To continue to apply the age restrictions, for example 40+ year olds, to some properties.

**Reason For Decision:** This enables South Cambridgeshire District Council to make interim amendments while the lettings policy is reviewed sub-regionally and a full consultation exercise is carried out. It also enables the Council to minimise the impact of forthcoming Housing Benefit changes on households taking on a new Council tenancy in the next ten months.