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1 June 2012

To: Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder

**Any other Member requiring a copy of the agenda should contact Democratic Services by 5.00pm on Monday 11 June 2012.**

**Please note the change of meeting room.**

Dear Sir / Madam

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S MEETING**, which will be held in **SWANSLEY ROOM, GROUND FLOOR** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **WEDNESDAY, 13 JUNE 2012 at 5.30 p.m.**

Yours faithfully  
**JEAN HUNTER**  
Chief Executive

**Requests for a large print agenda must be received at least 48 hours before the meeting.**

AGENDA		PAGES
PROCEDURAL ITEMS		
1.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
2.	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b> The Portfolio Holder is asked to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2012 as a correct record.	1 - 4
DECISION ITEMS		
3.	<b>Gypsy &amp; Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment - Internal Review</b>	5 - 10
4.	<b>MELBOURN: Garage to the rear of Car Park, High Street</b>	11 - 16
5.	<b>Interim amendments to the Lettings Policy</b>	17 - 22
STANDING ITEMS		
6.	<b>Tenant Participation Group</b>	
7.	<b>Forward Plan</b> The Portfolio Holder will maintain, for agreement at each meeting, a Forward Plan identifying all matters relevant to the Portfolio which it is believed are likely to be the subject of consideration and / or decision by	23 - 24

the Portfolio Holder, or recommendation to, or referral by, the Portfolio Holder to Cabinet, Council, or any other constituent part of the Council. The plan will be updated as necessary. The Portfolio Holder will be responsible for the content and accuracy of the forward plan.

**8. Date of next meeting**  
19 September 2012 at 5.30pm

**OUR VISION**

South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live and work in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautiful, rural and green environment. The Council will be recognised as consistently innovative and a high performer with a track record of delivering value for money by focussing on the priorities, needs and aspirations of our residents, parishes and businesses.

**OUR VALUES**

We will demonstrate our corporate values in all our actions. These are:

- Trust
- Mutual respect
- A commitment to improving services
- Customer service

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**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on  
Wednesday, 21 March 2012 at 5.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Mark Howell

**Councillors in attendance:**

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors: Jose Hales, Liz Heazell and Bunty Waters

Also in attendance: Alison Elcox, Ben Shelton and Hazel Smith

**Officers:**

Julie Fletcher	Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader
Anita Goddard	Housing Operational Services Manager
Stephen Hills	Affordable Homes Director
Schuyler Newstead	Housing Development & Enabling Manager
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer
Paul Williams	Equality and Diversity Officer

**70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mark Howell declared a personal interest as an employee of the Papworth Trust, a charity that includes a Registered Social Landlord.

Councillor Alison Elcox declared a personal interest by virtue of being a South Cambridgeshire landlord.

Councillor Ben Shelton declared a personal interest as an employee of a letting agent in Cambridge.

**71. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Housing Portfolio Holder signed, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2012, subject to the addition of Councillor Bunty Waters to the list of those present.

**72. HOUSING STRATEGY**

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking approval for the Housing Strategy, which set out the Council's overall vision and key aims for the housing service over the next five years.

The Strategy's key themes had been encapsulated by the acronym HEART (Health and Wellbeing, Economic Growth and Development, Affordable Housing, Reducing Fuel Poverty and promoting energy efficiency, and Tackling Homelessness). The intention was that the Housing Strategy would help focus resources from across the Council and put housing at the HEART of Council activity. In particular, Councillor Sue Ellington, Environmental Services Portfolio Holder, explained how the Ageing Well Strategy, promoted by Health and Environmental Services, would support the Housing strategy.

With reference to Affordable Housing, the Portfolio Holder highlighted the aim to identify a potential public Gypsy and Travellers Site in partnership with Cambridge City Council and seek a development and / or management partner to take this forward by 2015.

The Housing Portfolio Holder and all those present congratulated the Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader and her Team for compiling such a comprehensive document.

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

### 73. **EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY**

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking approval for the Empty Homes Strategy, which set out the Council's plans for bringing empty homes back into use over the next five years.

The Corporate Manager (Affordable Homes) said that the Council already had enforcement powers at its disposal as a last resort but the Strategy would give the Council a proactive way to bring empty homes back into use through negotiation and collaborative working.

Those present agreed that local Members should be kept informed about the location of empty properties within their wards.

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

### 74. **TENANCY POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report on the Tenancy Policy.

The Portfolio Holder was minded to end the practice of offering secure 'lifetime' tenancies, replacing them with flexible tenancies for a fixed period of ten years with the review process taking place after nine years. Concern was expressed that this would create unnecessary uncertainty for elderly people but the Portfolio Holder highlighted the importance of treating everybody fairly and equally. Nobody would be asked to move unless suitable alternative accommodation meeting their needs could be offered.

An updated Policy would be presented to the Housing Portfolio Holder in September 2012 for final approval.

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.

#### 75. **WILLINGHAM: ACCESS OVER BRICKHILLS - SALE PRICE OF EASEMENT**

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented the decision he was minded to make in relation to a price for the access land owned by the Council at Brickhills, Willingham. Planning permission had been obtained and the in principle decision to sell had been given.

The Portfolio Holder stated that, if the developer could acquire the land at a reduced cost, then the price being demanded by the Council for the access land would also be reduced, down to a minimum of £120,000. It would be essential that the land value could be substantiated to the Council's satisfaction.

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.

#### 76. **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.

#### 77. **SINGLE EQUALITIES SCHEME**

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report on the new Single Equality Scheme 2012 – 2015.

Those present discussed the need for effective monitoring and enforcement of the Scheme, compliance with which should be treated as mandatory. In relation to Gypsies and Travellers, they noted the different functions of the Gypsy and Traveller Community Strategy and the work led by the Planning section to identify of suitable sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.

The Portfolio Holder expressed the hope that Equalities and Diversity considerations would become deeply embedded in every aspect of the Council's activity. The Single Equality Scheme should become an "Active Document" and its importance emphasised to every South Cambridgeshire District Councillor and South Cambridgeshire District Council employee.

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

#### 78. **SERVICE PLANS 2012/13**

The Housing Portfolio Holder received and noted the final draft of the Affordable Homes

Service Plan for 2012-13 to 2014-15.

With regard to the Mobile Warden Scheme, the Portfolio Holder said that it was yet to be determined how Mobile Warden Schemes should be funded so as to maximise their effectiveness.

**79. HEALTH AND SAFETY WITHIN THE HOUSING SERVICE**

The Housing Portfolio Holder **received and noted** a report updating him about Health and Safety issues relevant to the Affordable Homes service.

**80. FORWARD PLAN**

Those present noted a draft Forward Plan for 2012-13. Following the current meeting, a further report on Tenancy Policy Development would be presented to the meeting in September 2012.

**81. TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP**

The Housing Portfolio Holder reported that the Tenant Participation Group would not be addressing this meeting.

**82. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Housing Portfolio Holder meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 13 June 2012, starting at 5.30pm.

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**The Meeting ended at 7.25 p.m.**

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**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder

13 June 2012

**AUTHOR/S:** Housing Director

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**GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION NEEDS  
ASSESSMENT INTERNAL REVIEW****Purpose**

1. To inform the Portfolio Holder on the outcome of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment internal review.
2. This is a not a key decision, because it is reporting the findings of a study.

**Recommendations**

3. That the Housing Portfolio Holder approves Option A to accept the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2011 as part of the evidence base to inform Council planning framework.
4. This includes the correction to the cumulative total of new pitches estimated for South Cambridgeshire, taking the forward projection of future need from 2021 to 20 pitches down from 47.

**Background**

5. In 2006, a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment was completed for nine districts including the seven districts in the Cambridge sub-regional housing area. This was based on primary research (interview surveys) and secondary data (caravan counts, census etc). It focused on need over the period 2005 to 2010.
6. The result was a highly respected methodology to assess the future accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and figures presented as evidence to the single-issue review of the (then) regional spatial strategy (RSS).
7. In 2010 work started to update this assessment, to ensure the districts involved had an up to date assessment of need (as required by the Housing Act 2004), and figures for 2011 onwards, which could also be used to assist the local plan making process.
8. The County Council Research Group were asked by the Cambridge Sub Regional Housing Board to carry out the update to the assessment as part of the regular Strategic Housing Market Assessment work they already carry out. The study took account of CLG Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Guidance (2007), and the DCLG consultation paper 'Planning for Traveller Sites' (2011) that was available at the time (note the final Planning Guidance was published in March 2012).
9. Rather than complete a primary research project again the research was carried out as a desk top exercise drawing on known data to refresh the figures identified in the 2006 study. This is a technique supported by the relevant Communities and Local Government guidance. The process of desktop analysis of the various data sources

is set out in the report itself. The emerging analysis was further developed with input from the Traveller Liaison Officers and detailed scrutiny of the methodology by the Chief Planning Officers group representing all of the districts in the study. In addition the modelled outputs were triangulated against the known historic patterns of need. In this way a high level of robustness has been achieved in the study.

10. The assessment work covered nine districts:

- Cambridge City
- East Cambridgeshire
- Fenland
- Forest heath
- Huntingdonshire
- Kings Lynn & West Norfolk
- Peterborough
- South Cambridgeshire
- St Edmundsbury

11. The study was presented to the Housing Portfolio Holder in October 2011 and was referred back to officers for further scrutiny before it could be adopted by the Council. All of the other eight districts have now formally adopted the study.

### Considerations

12. The Accommodation Needs Assessment is the work of an independent researcher and would form part of the evidence base for the plan making process. The delivery options open to the Council will be considered when this research is interpreted for the local planning policy. The report states “The figures provided are not intended to be taken as targets...Any such targets are a matter for local policy makers.”
13. The core data used to inform all Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessments is drawn primarily from the annual caravan counts which are governed by CLG guidance. In addition the local knowledge of Traveller Liaison Officers is used to inform assumptions regarding turnover and arising need. The 2006 Cambridge Sub Region Traveller Needs Assessment carried out by Anglia Ruskin University has also been used.
14. These sources give the following supply and needs figures.

Backlog of Need at 2011		
Heading	Figures	Notes
<b>Supply</b>		
Current Supply	245 pitches	Based on caravan counts and adjusted by local multipliers based on local knowledge. E.g. number of caravans typically found –on a pitch in the District.
<b>Current Need</b>		
Need arising from unauthorised pitches	4 pitches	Based on local caravan counts and local knowledge.
Need arising from overcrowding	1 pitch	Based on assumption of 2% overcrowding on public sites (29 pitches) drawn from 2006 GATANA and local knowledge
Need arising from temporary permissions	65 pitches	Data from Caravan Count and Planning Information.
Total Current Need (backlog)	69 pitches	Figures add up to 70 but included rounded figures so readjusted to 69

15. Having established the core supply and needs figures the following calculation has been carried out.

Heading	Figures	Need 2011 to 2016 Notes
Backlog (annualised)	14 per annum	69 divided by 5 (years)
Newly arising need due to population growth	9 per annum	Core data drawn from Traveller education Service & modelled. Equates to 3.6% growth which is close to the 3.3% identified in the 2006 Cambridge study.
Total demand	23 per annum	
Supply from turnover	10 per annum	Based on an assumption of 4%. This figure is drawn from local knowledge.
Shortfall 2011 to 2016	65 pitches	Annual shortfall of 13 multiplied by 5 years

16. Given the current number of pitches with temporary permissions at 69 an overall backlog of 65 seems appropriate. Other emerging need is being met by turnover.
17. For future years an assumption is made that the backlog has all been cleared by 2016. This increase in total supply means that the application of the 4% turnover assumption gives an increased annual supply of 12 pitches per year (the study assumes 10). This increased turnover figure is implied by the 2011 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment but is not carried forward into the tables showing future need. No other authority in the study area is affected by this clarification.
18. When matched against the anticipated increase in pitches needs in future years the following emerges.

Future Need - 2016- 2021	
Supply (assuming backlog met in previous 5 years)	310
Newly arising need per annum (based on traveller education data of 3.6% growth within this period)	11
Supply from turnover per annum (4% assumption)	12
Need for new pitches	0

Future Need - 2021-2026	
Supply	310
Newly arising need pa (based on traveller education data of 5% growth within this period)	16
Supply from turnover per annum (4% assumption)	12
Need for new pitches	4 pa or 20 in time period

Future Need - 2026-2031	
Supply (assuming need for new pitches identified for 2021-2026 is met)	330
Newly arising need pa (based on traveller education data of 3.6% growth within this period)	12
Supply from turnover per annum (4% assumption)	13
Need for new pitches	0

19. In addition to meeting the current backlog by 2016 the assessment identifies a need for an extra 20 pitches by 2026 ideally by 2021. Following the statistical clarification

noted above this is less than the 47 pitches originally identified in the study document.

20. The same methodology has been applied to all other districts in the study. Where differences occur it is as a result of differing local conditions. For example, Fenland have a similar base profile to South Cambridgeshire with 210 pitches. They do not however have as large a backlog of temporary permissions and are able to meet the projected growth in household formation from annual turnover and are not therefore anticipating a need to increase their current provision.
21. The Council has already secured with Cambridge City Council funding of £500,000 from the Homes and Communities Agency to assist with bringing a suitable site or sites forward to help meet this need identified for the District.

## Options

### **Option A**

22. 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**

23. 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.

## Implications

24.	Financial	None unless the decision is taken not to accept the study in which case costs of £6,000 - £14,00 would need to be incurred.
	Legal	The Accommodation Needs Assessment is a legal requirement under the Housing Act 2004.
	Staffing	None
	Risk Management	It is prudent for the Council to base its planned for provision for Gypsy and Traveller sites on the best assessment need available to avoid the risk of unauthorised encampments and potential legal action.
	Equality and Diversity	Gypsies and travellers are the largest minority group within the District.

Equality Impact Assessment completed	
	Not applicable
Climate Change	None

### Consultations

25. The Accommodation Needs Assessment was developed in consultation with specialist officers from all nine districts and Chief Planning Officers from all of the districts.
26. The author of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment has been consulted on the statistical correction noted at point 16 above and he accepts the validity of this statement.

### Consultations with Children and Young People

27. None

### Effect on Strategic Aims

28. ***Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.***

***We are committed to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.***

The Council's vision within the Gypsy & Traveller Community Strategy is to "*ensure that Gypsy and Traveller communities enjoy equality of service and are part of cohesive communities within which people from different backgrounds participate together and share equal rights and responsibilities.*" The Accommodation Needs Assessment provides a robust assessment to help inform future policies to address the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community in the District.

### Conclusions / Summary

29. This report summarises the key findings within the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment 2011. Council officers have now had the opportunity to further investigate the robustness of the research and recommend that the study be accepted on the proviso that the correction to the forward projection of future need of 20 pitches down from 47 is accepted.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Cambridge Area Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA) 2011

**Contact Officer:** Stephen Hills – Housing Director  
Telephone: (01954) 713412

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## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder

13 June 2012

**AUTHOR/S:** Housing Director

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**GARAGE SITE REAR OF CAR PARK, HIGH STREET, MELBOURN**
**Purpose**

1. To seek agreement by the Housing Portfolio Holder to transfer the garage site rear of the public car park, High Street, Melbourn (as shown outlined in red on the attached plan) to the Parish Council at nominal cost.

**Recommendations**

2. That the Housing Portfolio Holder agrees to extend the long lease of the car park, High Street, Melbourn to Melbourn Parish Council to include the garage site at the rear, subject to SCDC meeting the costs of demolition and its own legal fees. Lease terms to remain the same as the existing lease of the car park.

**Reasons for Recommendations**

3. The Council would no longer be responsible for maintaining the garage block nor managing garage lettings.
4. Refurbishment of the site by the Parish Council and the extension to the car park will greatly improve the appearance of the area.

**Background**

5. A 99-year lease of the car park was granted to the Parish Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2010. Lease terms include:
  - i) Site to be used as free public car park
  - ii) Lessee responsible for maintenance
  - iii) Lessee has option to purchase freehold of site within lease term, subject to 50% of open market value to be received by the Council if it is to be used other than for community purposes
6. Before the lease was drawn up, the Parish Council expressed interest in taking over the garage site but the matter was put on hold until the proposed review of all the garage sites had been undertaken.
7. The Parish Council has again requested that the site be transferred to them through extension of the existing lease, subject to SCDC meeting the costs of demolition and its own legal fees.

**Considerations**

8. The block consists of 14 garages, all in poor condition. It would not be cost-effective to refurbish the units or rebuild them as the 6 existing garage tenants can be

relocated to other garage sites in Melbourn. It is believed that some of these units are used for storage.

9. The garage site is not suitable for redevelopment for housing purposes.
10. The Parish Council propose to resurface the area following demolition of the garages and extend the car park to include some landscaping. This will greatly improve the appearance of this area.
11. No quotation for the demolition of the garages has yet been obtained but it may cost the Council up to £10,000. This includes the removal of roof asbestos.

### Options

12. Extend the long lease of the car park, High Street, Melbourn for Melbourn Parish Council to include the garage site at the rear, subject to SCDC meeting the costs of demolition and its own legal fees. Lease terms to remain the same as the existing lease of the car park.
13. Retain the garage area in Council ownership and consider refurbishment or replacement.

### Implications

14.	Financial	Both options will incur cost to the Council but Option 1 will improve the appearance of the area and relieve the Council of any responsibility in the future
	Legal	The parish Council will meet the cost of the legal fees associated with the lease.
	Staffing	None
	Risk Management	The Council is currently liable for the safety of the garage site
	Equality and Diversity	None
	Equality Impact Assessment completed	No Not relevant
	Climate Change	None

### Consultations

15. Councillor Hales and Councillor Barrett support the proposal to transfer the garage area to the Parish Council

### Effect on Strategic Aims

16. AIM: To make sure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer outstanding and sustainable quality of life for our residents  
Transferring this site to the Parish Council following demolition of the garages will enable significant improvements to be made to the area

### Conclusions / Summary

17. Melbourn Parish Council have requested that the garage site at the rear of the car park, High Street be transferred to them as an extension to their existing 99-year



lease of the car park, subject to SCDC meeting the costs of demolition and its legal fees. Following demolition, they propose to extend the parking area and include some landscaping which will greatly improve the appearance of this area. Refurbishing or rebuilding the garages would incur significant cost and they would remain the responsibility of the Council. Existing garage tenants can be relocated.

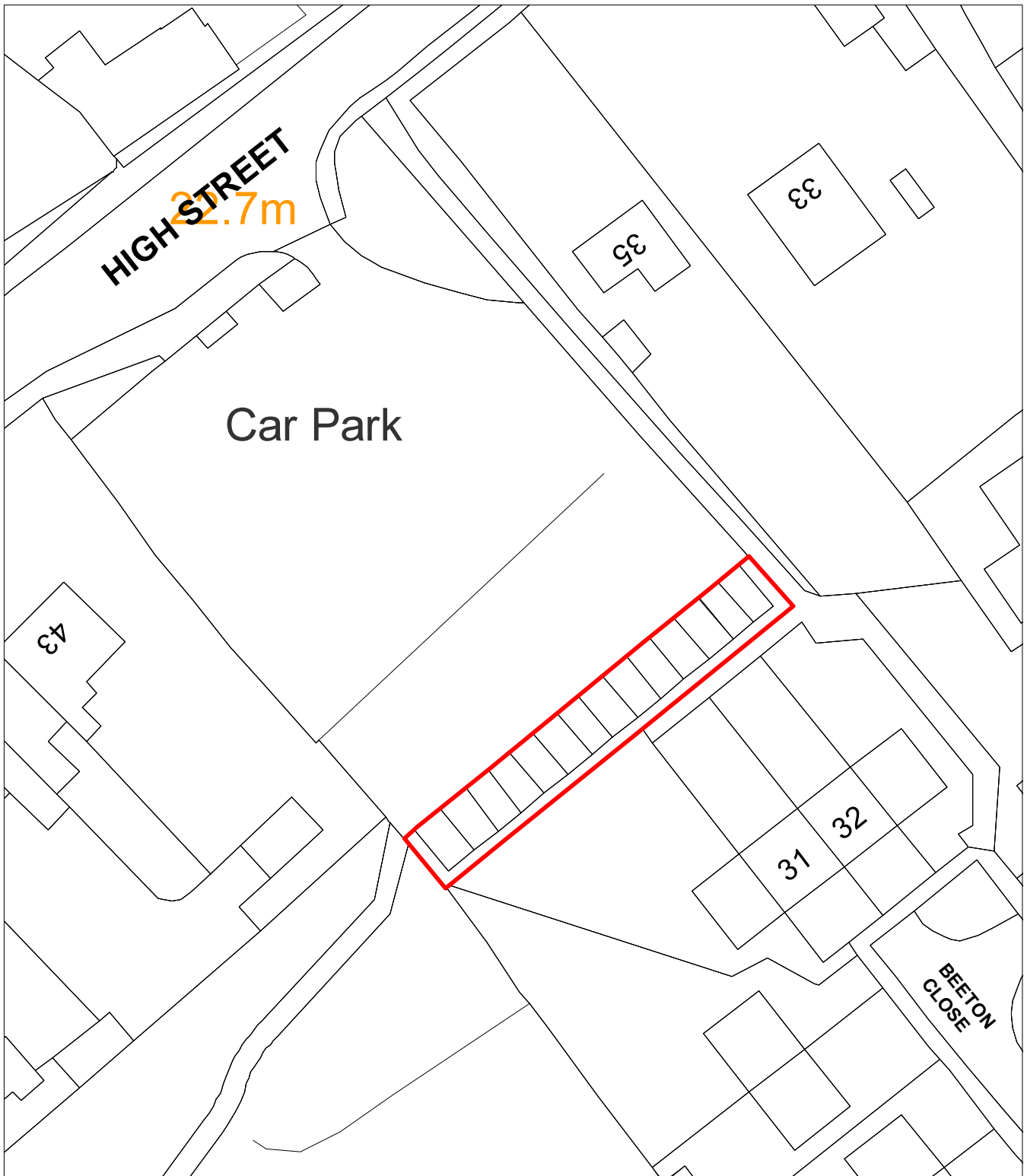
**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None.

**Contact Officer:** Jenny Clark – Lands Officer  
Telephone: (01954) 713336

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**GARAGE SITE REAR OF CAR PARK, HIGH ST, MELBOURN**



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**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder

13 June 2012

**AUTHOR/S:** Housing Director

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**INTERIM AMENDMENTS TO THE LETTINGS POLICY****Purpose**

1. To seek agreement to make interim changes to the Council's existing lettings policy in order to enable applicants to bid for properties that meet the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) size criteria.
2. To seek agreement that all properties within the Council's stock (other than that designated as sheltered accommodation or for those over pensionable age), will be available for letting to general needs households, without age restrictions.
3. This is not a key decision because at this stage only interim amendments are being requested. Applicants will continue to be able to choose between the size of property they are eligible for under the existing lettings policy and / or the size of property that meets the criteria for the LHA for their household size.

**Recommendations**

4. That the Housing Portfolio Holder agrees 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.

**Reasons for Recommendations**

5. This enables the Council to make interim amendments whilst the lettings policy is reviewed sub-regionally and a full consultation exercise is carried out.
6. The recommendation also enables us to minimise the impact of forthcoming Housing Benefit changes on households taking on a new Council tenancy in the coming 10 months.

**Background**

7. As part of the Welfare Reforms, housing benefit will be reduced for working age tenants of social rented properties who are under-occupying their properties. The Housing Benefit regulations stipulate that one bedroom is required for the following:
  - adult couple
  - other person aged 16 or over
  - any two children of the same sex up to the age of 16

- any two children regardless of sex under the age of 10
  - any other child.
8. Housing Benefit will be reduced by 14% for those under-occupying by 1 bedroom and 25% for those under-occupying by 2 bedrooms.
  9. There are no interim provisions for this and it will come into effect from April 2013.
  10. We are currently working with our sub-regional partners to review the lettings policy, taking into account the welfare reforms and provisions for members of the armed forces.
  11. This review will include a three month consultation period and a final report to the Portfolio Holder in November 2012.

### **Considerations**

12. Our existing matching policy (attached), does not enable us to allocate accommodation in line the new LHA limitations. For example, it does not enable us to allocate a 2-bedroom property to a family with two-children. However, under the LHA regulations, a family with two children would only be entitled to a two bedroom property, unless the children were of opposite sex and one was 10 or over. This will mean that such families will not receive the full amount of housing benefit to cover their rent.
13. It is therefore proposed that the matching policy is amended with immediate effect to enable properties to be offered in line with the forthcoming changes to social housing where the LHA regulations on size will be applied.
14. The Council will not impose this matching criteria until full consultation has been undertaken, however, we will write to all applicants and advise them of the LHA size criteria when bidding and its financial implications for them if they choose to take on the tenancy.
15. In addition, it will be necessary to let all property types, including bungalows (excluding those designated for the elderly) to general needs applicants rather than the current policy of restricting these to over 40's. This is because:
  - (a) There will be higher levels of need from households requiring 2 bedroom homes and the Council needs to maximise the opportunities to alleviate some of this two-bedroom housing need.
  - (b) It will not be possible in future to offer two bedroom homes to single applicants or couples due to the LHA restrictions.

### **Options**

16. 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.
17. 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.

18. 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.
19. D - To continue to apply the age restrictions, for example 40+ year olds, to some properties.

### Implications

20.	Financial	A number of SCDC tenants are currently under-occupying, based on the LHA size criteria and will therefore have their housing benefit reduced from April 2013. The interim arrangements will help to minimise the number of additional cases allocated properties between now and April 2013 when the LHA size criteria is applied to social rented properties.
	Legal	Lettings are made in accordance with Part 6 of the 1996 Housing Act. Significant changes require full consultation and therefore interim arrangements as described in this report are requested at present.
	Staffing	None
	Risk Management	There is a significant risk in continuing to give no option to applicants other than to offer them a property for which their housing benefit entitlement will be restricted, if we do not take interim measures.
	Equality and Diversity	The interim measures can be applied to all households, however, those of pensionable age will not be affected by the LHA restrictions and therefore our attention will focus on working age applicants.
	Equality Impact Assessment completed	Yes A further EQIA will be completed for the draft and final revised lettings policy.
	Climate Change	None

### Consultations

21. Full consultation is planned for the sub regional review of the lettings policy.

### Consultation with Children and Young People

22. None

### Effect on Strategic Aims

23. ***We will make sure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer outstanding and sustainable quality of life for our residents***  
The interim measures will enable new tenants to sustain their homes and therefore their quality of life.

**Conclusions / Summary**

24. As part of the welfare reforms, tenant's under-occupying social rented accommodation will have their housing benefit entitlement reduced from April 2013.
25. Our existing lettings policy does not match the size criteria of the LHA.
26. The Council is working with the Cambridge sub region to review the lettings policy and this needs to go through a three-month consultation period and approval process.
27. It is therefore important to consider some immediate interim amendments to our existing lettings policy in order to minimise the impact on new tenants having their housing benefit entitlement reduced after April 2013.

**Background papers:** None

**Contact Officer:** Sue Carter/ Heather Wood – Head of Housing advice and options  
Telephone: (01954) 713044



## Matching Policy: Housing Register

Household Type		5 Bed House	4 Bed House	3 Bed House	2 Bed House	1 Bed House	2 Bed maisonette	2 Bed Flat	
								First floor or above	Ground floor
Joint Applicants	Aged 60+								
Single Applicants	Aged 60+								
Joint Applicants	Aged 40-60				2	2	1	1	2
Single Applicants	Aged 40-60					1			
Joint Applicants	Aged <40			3	1	2	1	1	1
Single Applicants	Aged <40				3	1			3
Families	1 child			2	1		2	2	1
	2 children		3	1					
	3 children	3	2	1					
	4 children	2	1	1*					
	5+ children	1	1	1*					

Household Type		1 Bed Flat	3 Bed Bungalow	2 Bed Bungalow	1 Bed Bungalow	Bedsit Flat	Bedsit Bungalow	Sheltered Flat/ Bungalow (1 or 2 Bed)	Sheltered Bedsit
Joint Applicants	Aged 60+			1	1			1	
Single Applicants	Aged 60+			1	1		1	1	1
Joint Applicants	Aged 40-60	2		1	2				
Single Applicants	Aged 40-60	1		2	1	1	1		
Joint Applicants	Aged <40	2		3	3				
Single Applicants	Aged <40	1		5	2	1	2		
Families	1 child		2	4					
	2 children		1						
	3 children		1						
	4 children		1*						
	5+ children		1*						

## Notes:

1. The numbers in the table indicate the priority order for that property type. All applicants within each priority group would normally be considered before moving to the next priority group.
2. Households with special needs may be considered for any suitable property types and not just those falling within their particular household's size under the above policy.
3. Details of the number and type of homes in each parish that are either owned by the Council or a Housing Association can be provided separately by the Housing advice and options service upon request.
4. In certain circumstances bedroom entitlement may be increased to take account of additional factors, e.g. need for a live-in carer, etc.
5. \* Due to the limited supply of larger properties, these households will also be considered for three bedroom properties

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## Housing Portfolio Holder Forward Plan 2012/13

Portfolio Holder Meeting	Agenda Title	KeyPurpose	Director (s)	Responsible Officer(s)	Issue and Agenda Items Created?	Added to Plan Date
19 Sept	Sheltered Housing – Housing Support Tender	Y Decision	Stephen Hills	Tracey Cassidy	Y	04-05-11
	Allocations Policy	Y Decision	Stephen Hills	Sue Carter /Heather Wood	Y	07-06-11
	Tenancy Policy	Y Decision	Stephen Hills	Anita Goddard	Y	15-04-11
					Y	07-06-11
21 Nov	New Build Strategy	Y Decision	Stephen Hills	Schuyler Newstead	Y	22-02-12
	Tenancy Strategy	Y Decision	Stephen Hills	Stephen Hills	Y	07-07-11
	Housing Service Plan (draft)	Y Decision	Stephen Hills	Stephen Hills	Y	07-06-11
16 Jan	Capital and Revenue Estimates 2013/14	Y Decision	Stephen Hills	Gwynn Thomas		
20 Mar	HIA Progress	N Monitoring	Stephen Hills	Schuyler Newstead		
	Resident Involvement Strategy	N Decision	Stephen Hills	Gill Anderton		
	Homelessness Strategy	Y Decision	Stephen Hills	Sue Carter/Heather Wood		

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