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8 October 2013

To: Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder

Mark Hersom  
Bunty Waters

Opposition Spokesman  
Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Dear Sir / Madam

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S MEETING**, which will be held in **MONKFIELD ROOM, FIRST FLOOR** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **WEDNESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2013 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.**

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<b>AGENDA</b>		<b>PAGES</b>
<b>PROCEDURAL ITEMS</b>		
<b>1.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b> The Portfolio Holder is asked to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2013 as a correct record.	<b>1 - 4</b>
<b>DECISION ITEMS</b>		
<b>3.</b>	<b>Linton: Sale of land adjacent 70 Balsham Road</b>	<b>5 - 10</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Design Guide for New Build Council Properties</b>	<b>11 - 26</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018</b> The Homelessness Review (February 2013), which has helped inform the Homelessness Strategy, is attached to the electronic version of this agenda on the Council's website – visit <a href="http://www.scambs.gov.uk">www.scambs.gov.uk</a> and follow 'Your Council'.	<b>27 - 78</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Use of Council Housing as Temporary Accommodation</b>	<b>79 - 88</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Affordable Homes Draft Service Plan 2014/15</b>	<b>89 - 92</b>
<b>STANDING ITEMS</b>		
<b>8.</b>	<b>Tenant Participation Group</b>	

**9. Work Programme**

**93 - 94**

The Portfolio Holder will maintain, for agreement at each meeting, a Work Programme identifying all matters relevant to the Portfolio which it is believed are likely to be the subject of consideration and / or decision by the Portfolio Holder, or recommendation to, or referral by, the Portfolio Holder to Cabinet, Council, or any other constituent part of the Council. The programme will be updated as necessary. The Portfolio Holder will be responsible for the content and accuracy of the Work Programme.

**10. Date of next meeting**

19 March 2014 at 5.30pm

**OUR LONG-TERM VISION**

South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live, work and study 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 focusing 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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### **Security**

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- **Do not** re-enter the building until the officer in charge or the fire brigade confirms that it is safe to do so.

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### **Access for People with Disabilities**

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### **Disturbance by Public**

If a member of the public interrupts proceedings, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room. If there is a general disturbance in any part of the meeting room open to the public, the Chairman may call for that part to be cleared.

### **Smoking**

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### **Food and Drink**

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# Agenda Item 2

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on  
Thursday, 1 August 2013 at 5.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Mark Howell

### **Councillors in attendance:**

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors: Bunty Waters

Also in attendance: Nigel Cathcart, Kevin Cuffley, Alison Elcox and David McCraith

### **Officers:**

Jenny Clark	Lands Officer
Anita Goddard	Housing Operational Services Manager
Stephen Hills	Affordable Homes Director
Peter Moston	Under Occupation Officer
Schuyler Newstead	Housing Development & Enabling Manager
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer
Heather Wood	Housing Advice and Options Manager

## **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

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

## **2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Housing Portfolio Holder signed, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2013.

## **3. ASSET MANAGEMENT POLICY**

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking his endorsement in principle for the adoption of a new HRA (Housing Revenue Account) Asset Sustainability Policy.

The Director of Housing commended the draft Policy for adding clarity to the process. However, Councillor Nigel Cathcart expressed concern about the implications of some of the new arrangements outlined in Appendix B to the report. The Portfolio Holder instructed officers to arrange a formal presentation open to all Members of Council.

The Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader recognised the concern about sales to South Cambs Limited and said that paragraph 5.6 of the Policy would be amended before it went to Cabinet to require the consent of the Secretary of State and read as follows:

### **“Sale to South Cambs Ltd**

There is an acute lack of affordable private rented accommodation in the District. Through South Cambs Ltd, the Council is well placed to become a key contributor to the supply of good quality affordable private rented accommodation. Through this policy, the Council may identify opportunities where there is a robust business

case to sell properties at best price to the company to enable properties to be let at a private market rate. For example, properties purchased under the Empty Homes Scheme but no longer required for temporary accommodation or where the decision has been made to sell Council property on the open market.

**Decision Process:** The Director of Housing has authority to approve sale of properties to South Cambs Ltd with the agreement of the Executive Director acting as the S.151 Officer; subject to the approval by the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Finance & Staffing Portfolio Holder. Secretary of State consent will need to be sought prior to any sale to South Cambs Ltd in accordance with Section 32 of the Housing Act 1985 (General Housing Consents 2013).

**Consultation:** Local Member(s)"

The Housing Portfolio Holder **recommended to Cabinet** (for onward recommendation to Council if necessary) the adoption of the new Housing Revenue Account Asset Sustainability Policy (Disposals and Acquisitions) attached as Appendix A.

#### 4. UNDER-OCCUPANCY POLICY

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking his approval for the adoption of a policy covering how the Council should respond to customers faced with a reduction in Housing Benefit and additional financial hardship due to Welfare Reform changes introduced in April 2013.

The Under-Occupation Officer summarised the Policy, focussing on the Support to Move scheme (paragraph 7.2) and the relationship between the Housing Management Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments. He said some people simply needed help in *arranging* their house move. Questioned by the Portfolio Holder, the Under-Occupation Officer assured him that, for the time being at least, there were sufficient funds available to operate an effective Support-to-Move scheme.

The Director of Housing explained that the Under-Occupation Policy was closely related to, but nevertheless separate from, the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy, a report on which would be presented to the Housing Portfolio Holder meeting in October 2013.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **approved** the 'Under-occupation Policy' as set out in Appendix A.

#### 5. BASSINGBOURN: DISPOSAL OF GARAGE SITE OFF MILL LANE

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking his approval for the disposal of the Council's garage site off Mill Lane, Bassingbourn as outlined red on plan. This matter had been deferred from the meeting in March 2013 (Minute 33 refers) to allow time for interested parties to put together a business case for the site and the former public house adjacent to it to be redeveloped for use by the community of Bassingbourn.

The applicants, Nigel Howard and David Chamberlain, attended the meeting. Mr Howard spoke enthusiastically about his plans to reopen the pub, and assured those present that he was keen to preserve and enhance the facility for the benefit of the entire community. He confirmed that he had no intention of building houses on the site.

Officers confirmed that the difference of £10,000 between the original site valuation and the sum of £30,000 now being offered was equivalent to the estimated cost of demolition

of a site of this size and safe disposal of asbestos.

Councillors Nigel Cathcart and David McCraith (the local Members) both supported the recommendation set out in the report from the Director of Housing. Councillor Cathcart noted that the transaction would include a clawback clause by which the Council could recover all or part of any financial benefit accruing to the purchaser as a result of the contract of sale.

Those present discussed the rumour that the new owners might change the pub's name. There were conflicting views on this point and, although Councillors Cathcart and McCraith were very keen to preserve the name of 'The Pear Tree'. The Housing Portfolio Holder said he would leave this aspect of the debate for resolution at local level, and would not make it a condition of sale.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **agreed in principle** that the site be offered for sale to the purchaser of the adjacent pub site at the price of £30,000 plus legal costs, for use as a parking and garden area to serve a new pub on the pub site, subject to planning permission and an uplift clause. Existing rights of way over the site to be retained. (Option One).

#### **6. TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP**

There was no report or discussion under this heading.

#### **7. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Housing Portfolio Holder noted his Work Programme and reminded those present that the Tenant Participation Group would be presenting a report at the meeting in October 2013.

#### **8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Those present noted that the next Housing Portfolio Holder meeting had been scheduled for 16 October 2013, starting at 5.30pm.

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**The Meeting ended at 6.40 p.m.**

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# Agenda Item 3

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder

16<sup>th</sup> October 2013

**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Housing

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### **Linton: Sale of land adjacent 70 Balsham Road**

#### **Purpose**

1. To seek agreement by the Housing Portfolio Holder for an open market sale of land adjacent 70 Balsham Road, Linton as outlined in red on the plan.
2. This not a key decision but it has been brought before the Housing Portfolio Holder as it could result in a significant financial return for the Council.

#### **Recommendations**

3. That the Housing Portfolio Holder agrees for the land adjacent 70 Balsham Road, Linton to be placed for sale on the open market, subject to planning permission for the development of one dwelling.

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. The tenant of 70 Balsham Road is unable to maintain this part of his garden and wishes to surrender the area from his tenancy.
5. The area has potential for the development of one new dwelling and the receipt from an open market sale could contribute towards other property refurbishment or new build.

#### **Background**

6. 70 Balsham Road is a Council property with a large side garden.
7. The tenant of this property is unable to maintain the side garden area and it is currently overgrown with weeds.
8. The tenant wishes to surrender this area from his tenancy.
9. The land has vehicular access from Balsham Road with a dropped kerb.

#### **Considerations**

10. The site is large enough to support the development of one new dwelling.
11. The loss of this area from 70 Balsham Road would still leave a sizeable garden area for this property. A new hardstanding and dropped kerb could be provided to serve the existing property.
12. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development has confirmed that as a single plot, it would not be cost-effective for a new build by the Council.

13. Pocock & Shaw have estimated that the site could fetch £110,000 - £120,000 on the open market, with planning permission for one dwelling.
14. A financial return for the Council from an open market sale of this land could be used to contribute towards refurbishment of other Council properties or new build.

### **Options**

15. Option One - Offer the land adjacent 70 Balsham Road for sale on the open market, subject to planning permission for one dwelling. Consider the provision of a new hardstanding and dropped kerb for the existing property.
16. Option Two - Retain the land in Council ownership as part of 70 Balsham Road.

### **Implications**

17. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

#### ***Financial***

18. Option One could result in a significant capital receipt for the Council. With Option Two the full garden area would be retained for 70 Balsham Road.

#### ***Legal***

19. Legal advice will be sought to carry out any sale.

### **Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)**

20. Cllr Bear is against the sale of the land adjacent 70 Balsham Road, as she feels this is a false, short term economic proposal: excess SCDC land in Linton is virtually non-existent so the opportunity to build Council housing on Council land in a sustainable area of the village should be treated as a bonus and not looked upon as being too complicated for SCDC to manage. The demand for affordable housing in Linton is high and it is the duty of SCDC not to put forward the easy argument that the plot is too small to do an own build and too time consuming to organise. The Council should be working conscientiously to maximise its housing stock in Linton for the future.
21. Cllr Hickford has no objections to the sale of this land for development.
22. Linton Parish Council have no objections to the sale of this land for development.
23. The Housing Services Manager supports an open market sale of this land, subject to planning permission for one new dwelling.

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

24. **Aim 1 - AIM: To make sure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer outstanding and sustainable quality of life for our residents**  
Selling this land would incur a capital receipt for the Council which could contribute towards refurbishment of other properties or new build.

## **Background Papers**

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

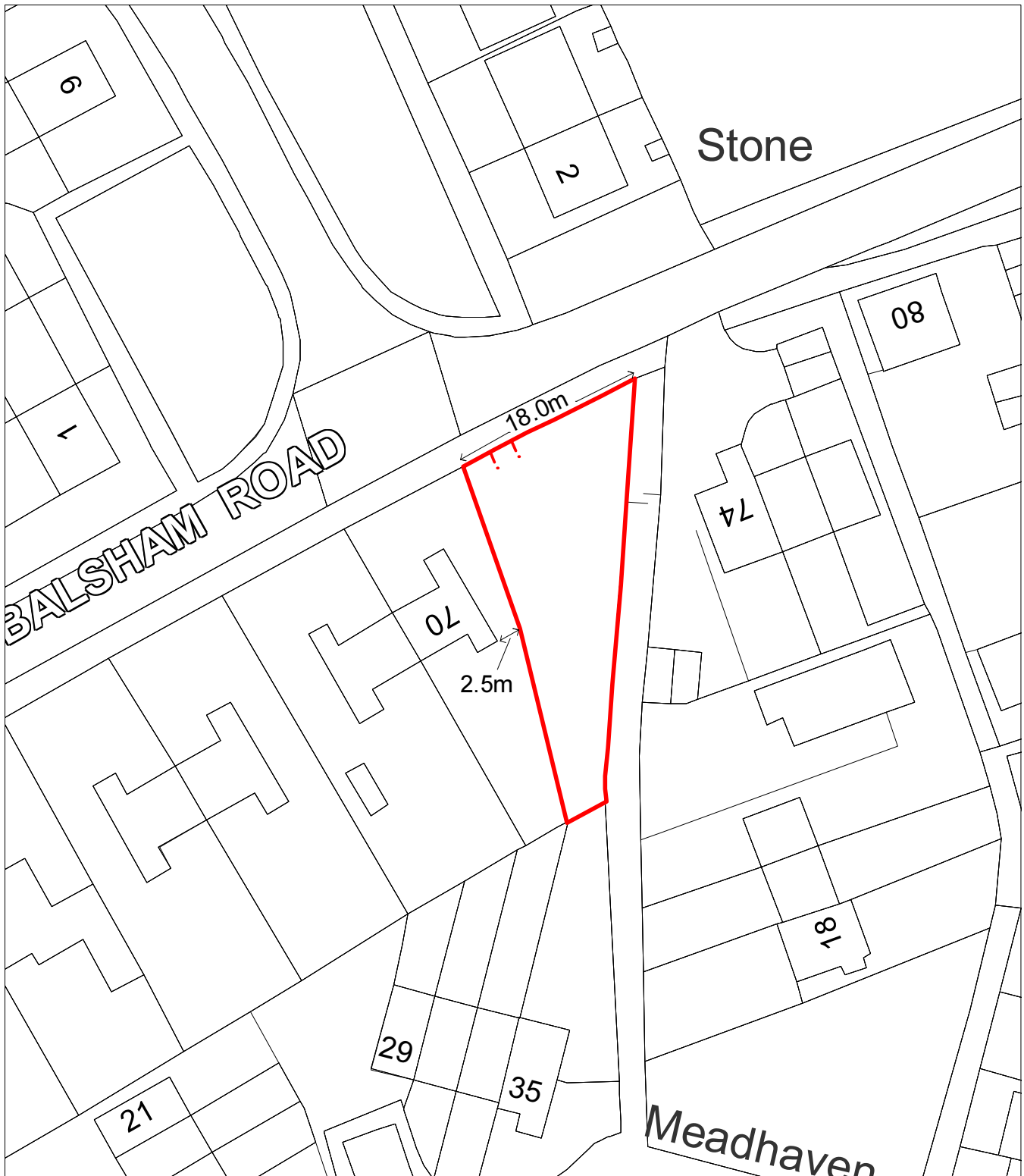
- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

None

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

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LAND ADJACENT 70 BALSHAM ROAD, LINTON



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SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL LICENCE NO 100022500 2013

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# Agenda Item 4



**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Stephen Hills – Director of Housing

16 October 2013

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## Design Guide for New Build Council Properties

### Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide guidance on the essential principles to follow in the design of the Councils own affordable housing projects.
2. This is not a key decision because the Design Guide provides guidance only for the expected standards we want to achieve in our own Council properties, and it was first published in the March 2013 Forward Plan.

### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder approves the content of the Design Guide to enable officers to introduce a consistent approach to the standards in our new build properties

### Reasons for Recommendations

4. The guidance is necessary to ensure that the Council is able to adopt a consistent approach to the design standards we expect in our new homes.

### Background

5. The Councils new build strategy which was approved by Cabinet on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012, stated as part of its overall action plan that it would require a “Design and Standards Charter “ to include the principles of the Housing Quality Indicator, as provided by the Homes and Communities Agency system and provide for sustainable development that will ensure quality homes.
6. The Council has now appointed an external set of consultants who are employed as the Councils Design Team. This was another action arising from the New Build Strategy and was necessary to ensure that this design guide was produced.

### Considerations

7. The decision to build new council housing in South Cambridgeshire means that SCDC will be able to contribute to the shortfall in newly built affordable homes.
8. SCDCs aim is to achieve safe, secure, easily maintained, warm, energy efficient, environmentally sustainable, affordable housing within the constraints of available finance. The Council will actively promote a programme to develop new council owned homes to help meet housing need across the district.

9. The design brief attached at Appendix A exceeds the minimum standards required by the Council's generic design guidance for new developments. The guidance will be reviewed annually to ensure that it never falls below the Council's generic standards.

### **Options**

10. The Housing Portfolio Holder has the option to approve the Design Guide in its current form.
11. The Housing Portfolio Holder alternatively, may wish to seek amendments to the current draft and request that the Director of Housing ensures that these amendments are made.

### **Implications**

12. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:

#### ***Financial***

13. This report itself has no financial implications but the parameters in which it operates in relation to its links and impact to the Councils New Build Strategy will require funding to be made available to deliver the targets set out in the action plan contained within the new build strategy

#### ***Legal***

This report itself has no legal implications but the projects arising out of it will require our in house legal team to draft appropriate agreements for land acquisitions and planning agreements.

#### ***Staffing***

15. There are no specific staffing requirements arising from this project at this stage

#### ***Risk Management***

16. Risk logs will be developed against each new build project that SCDC undertakes.

#### ***Equality and Diversity***

17. An equality impact assessment has been carried out for the purposes of the attached design guide.

### **Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)**

18. Consultation has been carried out with the Housing Management and Technical Services Team. There has been no response to the document from the Youth Council

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

19. The Affordable Homes Service plan is important to help deliver all three of the Councils main strategic aims.

### **Background Papers**

New Build Strategy 2012-2015

<http://modern.gov/documents/s67997/New%20build%20strategy%20-%20rep.pdf>

**Report Author:** Schuyler Newstead – Head of Housing Strategy and Development  
Telephone: (01954) 713332





# **OUTLINE DESIGN GUIDE**

**For**

## **SCDC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

**for**



**Draft (2) issued: 1/10/13**

# CONTENTS

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 2.0 DESIGN OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Site considerations
- 2.2 Space standards
- 2.3 Floor/ceiling height
- 2.4 Flexibility and maintenance
- 2.5 Tenure

## 3.0 DESIGN STANDARDS

- 3.1 Specific design criteria
- 3.2 Wheelchair dwellings
- 3.3 Code for Sustainable Homes
- 3.4 Renewable technologies
- 3.5 Furniture layout

## 4.0 DWELLINGS

- 4.1 Living (Drawing) room
- 4.2 Bedrooms
- 4.3 Hall/Landing
- 4.4 Bathroom/Ensuite
- 4.5 Kitchen
- 4.6 Cloakroom

## 5.0 COMMUNAL FACILITIES

## 6.0 BUILDING COMPONENTS

- 6.1 Windows
- 6.2 Roofs
- 6.3 Patios
- 6.4 Internal Joinery
- 6.5 Kitchen fittings
- 6.6 White goods
- 6.7 Sanitaryware

## 7.0 SERVICES

- 7.1 Mechanical installations
- 7.2 Water supply
- 7.3 Heating system
- 7.4 Lighting
- 7.5 Power
- 7.6 Smoke detection
- 7.7 Telephone installation
- 7.8 TV aerial
- 7.9 External lighting

## 8.0 FINISHES

- 8.1 Wall finishes
- 8.2 Wall tiling
- 8.3 Floor finishes
- 8.4 Ceiling finishes

## 9.0 SITE WORKS

- 9.1 Access and car parking
- 9.2 Ancillary buildings
- 9.3 Landscaping
- 9.4 Boundary treatment
- 9.5 Highways

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this Design Guide is to provide essential principles to follow in the design of housing for South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Each project will have its own particular design features and specific requirements appropriate to site location.

Where proposals differ from the brief they must be brought to the attention of SCDC for their approval.

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) is well positioned to become an active development partner within the South Cambridgeshire District, and will be able to contribute effectively to regional and sub-regional agendas whilst meeting its own Business Plan Objectives and the Councils Aims and Objectives.

SCDCs aim is to achieve safe, secure, easily maintained, warm, energy efficient, environmentally sustainable, affordable housing within the constraints of available finance. The Council will actively promote a programme to develop new council owned homes to help meet housing need across the district.

## **2.0 DESIGN OBJECTIVES**

### **2.1 Site considerations**

Sites come in all shapes/sizes and adjoining buildings, existing trees, changes of level and location of mains services are a few of the factors effecting the size, height and position of a new scheme. Consider in particular:

- a) Spaces should be arranged to take maximum advantage of what the site can offer, for instance locate housing toward the quieter areas of the site, make a focal point of existing landmarks. Views and privacy need to be considered equally.
- b) Orientate habitable rooms to ensure sunlight for at least part of the day to create a good balance of natural and artificial light.
- c) Arrange the site layout to achieve usable external spaces, preferably private, relatively sunny gardens.
- d) Establish a logical external circulation between the site entrance/car parking and dwellings, with appropriate car parking numbers and positions

## 2.2 Space Standards

New residential units shall be designed so that their gross internal floor areas (GIA's) meet or exceed the residential space standards set out in the table below

Bedrooms	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	4
Bedspaces	1	2	3	4	4	5	5	6	7
Studio	37	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Flats	-	50	N/A	70	74	86	90	99	-
2 Storey House	-	TBC	N/A	83	87	96	100	107	-
3 Storey House	-	-	N/A	-	-	102	106	113	123
Bungalow	-	56	N/A	72	-	-	-	-	-

In order to ensure reasonable living conditions, residential development should have reasonable room sizes and convenient and efficient room layouts to meet the changing needs of residents over their lifetimes. Such development will:

- a) have minimum bedroom sizes for single and double bedrooms of 7.5 sq m and 11.5 sq m respectively;
- b) any room designated on plan as a study will need to be of at least the size of a single bedroom

## 2.3 Floor/ceiling height

Light and feeling of space is crucial. Ceiling heights are important to creating the right feeling of air and space, therefore rooms should have a minimum floor-ceiling height of 2.3m and the designers must have due regard for the requirement for underfloor heating (see 7.3) when calculating the overall storey heights for the building.

## 2.4 Flexibility and maintenance

Keeping the cost of living down is important to all households. SCDC wants to keep the cost of monthly bills and maintenance as low as possible and these efficiencies need to start at the early design stages.

All aspects of the design are to reflect good building practice and materials should be selected on the basis that they will require relatively little maintenance. A minimum design life of 60 years is expected.

Whole life costs as well as capital costs should be considered when selecting materials.

## 2.5 Tenure

Tenure will vary across the development programme to meet demand and funding/viability challenges. Properties will be constructed for rent, intermediate tenures sale and outright sale.

On this particular project the mix of tenure shall be:

Rent		Intermediate tenures		Outright sale	
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## 3.0 **DESIGN STANDARDS**

### 3.1 **Specific design criteria**

All schemes must meet any design, technical criteria and recommendations required to meet:

- Home Builders Federation guidance;
- NHBC Standards (or other approved warranty provider);
- Lifetime Homes;
- Secured by Design;
- London Housing Design Guide (where directed).

When designing the building the Constructor must have regard for the Building for Life 12 criteria and should endeavour to achieve Building for Life 'Diamond' status and achieve as many 'green' lights as possible, minimise 'ambers' and avoid 'reds'.

### 3.2 **Wheelchair compliant dwellings**

Where wheelchair standard properties are required then these will be discussed with the designer and the relevant space standards agreed. On this particular scheme  nr wheelchair standard properties are required.

### 3.3 **Code for Sustainable Homes**

Generally schemes should achieve Code Level 4 (unless otherwise required by the Planning authority).

This particular scheme should achieve Code Level  and the designer is to arrange for a Pre-Assessment to be carried out to demonstrate to SCDC the methodology as to how this can be met.

### 3.4 **Renewable technologies**

Where renewable technologies are to be provided the proposals shall be discussed with SCDC prior to incorporation into the design.

### **3.5 Furniture layout**

All floor plans must indicate furniture layouts to comply with the National Housing Federation's "Standard & Quality in Development".

### **4.0 DWELLINGS GENERALLY**

All layouts should exceed the HQI minimum standards for unit layouts.

#### **4.1 Living room**

Living rooms should be minimum 3.5m in width.

Single doors are to connect Living rooms with the hall.

Where living rooms are located at the rear of properties dwellings are to have double doors opening onto outside space. In addition at least one opening window shall be provided.

Patio doors are to be capable of opening out through 180° and held back against external wall to give the impression that it is one space.

#### **4.2 Bedrooms**

Master bedrooms should be provided with fully glazed French doors opening inwards onto a Juliette balcony where in keeping with the site. Ideally the doors should open through 180° where the furniture layout allows.

Master bedrooms should be capable of accommodating twin beds and secondary bedrooms should be able accommodate a double bed. Bed positions should allow full access to the window.

#### **4.3 Hall/Landing**

Must be enclosed and be functional with best use of space.

Hall/landing cupboards/stores (x3) are required suitable for:

- (1) Drying clothes, featuring rail and slatted shelving (vented)
- (2) storage of upright vacuum cleaner, ironing board, and two full size suitcases
- (3) Airing cupboard with slatted shelves adjacent to cylinder. Cupboard to be sized to accommodate cylinder with solar storage capacity

Ensure that there is space for consumer unit in (2)

#### **4.4 Bathrooms/Ensuites**

Main bathrooms in all properties should have a bath with shower over.

Care should be taken to ensure that a window is not positioned over a basin, to allow a mirror to be placed in this location.

In 3bed (5ps) properties and above ensembles are to be provided featuring, shower cubicle, WC and wash hand basin. Extent of ensembles to private sale dwellings will be reviewed on a project by project basis.

Level access showers in lieu of baths with grab rails as appropriate shall be provided to wheelchair standard housing.

#### **4.5 Kitchens**

All kitchens should be designed to accommodate the following features:

- Space and infrastructure for cooker with integrated hob
- Space and infrastructure for fridge freezer and washing machine
- Infrastructure for hood and dishwasher (behind sacrificial base unit)
- Carousels to corner units;
- Pull-out recycling bin unit 300mm wide;
- Wall cabinet for gas boiler

Kitchens should be separate rooms, and should incorporate a dining area. Dining areas in lounges are not permitted.

#### **4.6 Cloakroom**

Two bed dwellings and above to have a downstairs cloakroom capable of adaptation to a shower room in accordance with Lifetime Homes.

### **5.0 COMMUNAL FACILITIES**

Where apartments are provided communal areas are to be avoided. In small blocks, each apartment shall have its own entrance.

Where large blocks of flats are proposed design guidance shall be supplied on a project by project basis.

### **6.0 BUILDING COMPONENTS**

#### **6.1 Windows**

SCDC's preference is for PVCu double glazed windows with a slimline profile.

An alternative window specification is only to be considered in exceptional circumstances for instance planner's requirements.

The building layout should maximise the available natural light/ventilation and all habitable rooms are to have "double" windows.

Ensure that the glazing line to all windows is no more than 810mm above FFL (except where above kitchen worktops).

## 6.2 Roofs

Avoid complex roof structures and assume a concrete roof tile unless otherwise dictated by planning. Plastic rainwater goods should be provided with leaf guards to areas adjacent to trees.

## 6.3 Patio/balconies

Balconies should not be provided unless dictated by planning.

Patio areas of 3mx2m (minimum) should be provided to each dwelling.

## 6.4 Internal Joinery

Internal doors to be moulded four panel doors painted white supplied by Howdens.

All ironmongery to be SAA finish, samples to be approved by SCDC

Skirting's to be 150mm high straight edge profile

Architraves to be 13 x 44mm straight edge profile

## 6.5 Kitchen fittings

Unless otherwise stated the kitchen fittings for the rented properties are to be from the Howden's Contract range, from a choice of Burford, Stornaway or Saponetta



The kitchen fittings for the intermediate tenures and/or market sale properties are to be from the Howden's Contract range; Burford (unless a suitably priced enhanced range can be sourced by the Contractor).





Consideration will be given to allowing purchaser choice if the project circumstances allow.

## 6.6 White goods

Unless otherwise stated kitchens are to be provided with TBC products in intermediate tenures and/or market sale plots in accordance with the following schedule:

Item	Affordable Rent	IT and Sale
Oven/hob	Space and infrastructure only	Yes – Spec TBC
Chimney Hood	Infrastructure only	Yes – Spec TBC
Fridge/Freezer	N/A	N/A
Washing Machine	Space and infrastructure only	N/A
Dishwasher	Infrastructure only (behind sacrificial base unit) 3B units+	Yes – integrated – spec TBC (3B+)

Fused spurs with engraved switches are to be provided to fridge/washing machine (and dishwasher where appropriate) spaces together with H&C services in the kitchens in all rented plots.

## 6.7 Sanitaryware

Unless otherwise stated the sanitaryware for the rented apartments is to be Twyford's or equal and approved proposed by the Contractor.

The sanitaryware for the intermediate tenures and/or market sale apartments is to be Twyford's range (unless suitably priced enhanced range can be sourced by the Contractor).

All sanitaryware is to be white.

WC's shall be close coupled (no concealed cisterns).

Basins shall be shallow with spray head taps.

Shallow baths to be provided with grips each side.

Showers shall feature a thermostatic mixer valve with shower curtain running the full length of the bath or retuning to form cubicle depending on the bathroom design

Ensuite's to feature shower tray and cubicle in lieu of bath.

## **7.0 SERVICES**

### **7.1 Mechanical installations**

Each dwelling shall be provided with an individual wall hung gas fired boiler located on an external wall in the kitchen. Solar enabled hot water cylinders are to be provided in airing cupboards. Combination boilers will not be permitted.

Boiler manufacturer to be Vaillant.

### **7.2 Water supply**

Incoming mains water supply to each dwelling shall be metered.

### **7.3 Heating system**

Underfloor heating is required in the dwellings with a thermostat in each room to regulate temperatures. Based on an external temperature of -3°C the heating system must be capable of achieving the following:

<u>Room</u>	<u>Min. Temp.</u>
Living room	21°C
Bathroom	22°C
Remaining rooms	18°C

## 7.4 Lighting

Lighting shall be designed to meet the recommended lighting levels given in the latest CIBSE Code for Lighting. Schedule of light fittings as given below:

Room	Affordable Rent	S/O and Sale
Living room	Low energy pendant light fittings (allow 2 no.)	Low energy pendant light fittings (allow 2 no.)
Kitchen	Track lighting featuring 3nr LED spot lights  lighting under wall cabinets (allow 4)	Low voltage LED downlighting (allow 6 no.)  lighting under wall cabinets (allow 4)
Bedrooms	Low energy pendant	Low energy pendant
Bathroom and ensembles	Surface mounted IP rated fitting  Shaver light 600mm long over mirror	Low voltage LED downlighting (allow 4 no. in ensuite and 6 no. in bathroom) with chrome bezel  Shaver light 600mm long over mirror
Hall	Low energy pendant light fittings (allow 2 no.)	Low energy pendant light fittings (allow 2 no.)
Elec. accessories	MK or similar approved with white plastic faceplates	As Affordable Rent except brushed chrome in hall, living room and kitchen

## 7.5 Power

Each apartment shall be provided with electrical points as given below:

<u>Room</u>	<u>Socket outlet (doubles)</u>	<u>Phone point</u>	<u>TV point</u>
Living room	4 nr	1 nr	1nr
Dining area	3 nr	1 nr	1nr
Home office area	2 nr	2 nr	-
Hall cupboards	1 nr	-	-
Bedrooms	4 nr	1 nr	1 nr
Kitchen	4 nr	-	-

In addition the following are to be provided to each dwelling:

- fused spur for burglar alarm in hall cupboard;
- fused spur for electric fire in living room.

## 7.6 Smoke detection

Dwellings shall be provided with mains operated self-contained smoke alarms located in the hall or as dictated by the requirements of the Building Regulations. The alarms shall be complete with a battery back-up facility and shall be interconnectable.

## 7.7 Telephone installation

Each dwelling shall be provided with a master telephone point in the living room with further points in home office area and bedrooms.

## **7.8 TV aerial**

Digital aerials are to be provided to all dwellings. Aerials to be positioned in lofts where possible.

## **7.9 External lighting**

External lighting will be dictated by the requirements of secured by design, the impact on surrounding dwellings and where access roads are adopted, the requirements of the highways authority.

## **8.0 FINISHES**

### **8.1 Wall finishes**

Dry lined plasterboard or wall plaster decorated with emulsion paint.

### **8.2 Wall tiling**

Full height tiling to bath and shower areas within bathrooms and ensuites. 300 x 200 wall tiles and one row 300 x 50mm feature tiles. Splashback to basins.

No tiling to kitchens. Worktop to be supplied with upstand. Stainless steel splashback behind cooker.

### **8.3 Floor finishes**

Slip resistant vinyl to bathrooms/kitchens in rented properties.

Carpet £15/m<sup>2</sup> on underlay to remaining rooms to intermediate tenures and outright sale properties.

### **8.4 Ceiling finishes**

Plasterboard and skim coat of plaster decorated with emulsion paint to dwellings.

Coving to be provided to intermediate tenures and outright sale properties.

## **9.0 SITE WORKS**

### **9.1 Access and car parking**

Access roads and parking must be sensitively integrated into the layout and be provided in accordance with South Cambridgeshire District Council's guide to parking on new developments. Generally parking will be in curtilage with an allowance for visitor parking.

### **9.2 Ancillary buildings**

All schemes should be provided with the following:

- refuse/recycling store (to local authority requirements);
- Garden shed;
- cycle storage shelter (if not within shed);

The location of the refuse/recycling store must take into account the max travel distances for refuse collection and vehicle turning spaces required by the LA.

Garages are not to be provided unless specifically requested.

Water butts to be provided where practical.

### **9.3 Landscaping**

All schemes will be properly landscaped with particular regard to easy maintenance and pavings, grass areas and planting are to be provided. The choice of shrubs and trees will take into account their eventual size, ensuring that views are not obstructed and dense planting which could provide hiding places will be avoided.

No trees should be planted close to the building and trees which will eventually obstruct light from dwellings should be avoided if at all possible.

All landscaped areas should be fully accessible to wheelchair users. Paths should be 1.2m wide and no path should be laid to a gradient steeper than 1:20. All paths must have a slip resistant finish and be self-draining.

### **9.4 Boundary treatment**

Typically 1.8m close boarded fencing to rear of properties and adjacent to public footways. Front gardens of properties to have a post and knee-rail fence.

Boundary treatments must meet Secured by Design criteria.

### **9.5 Highways (roads and footpaths)**

Highway works, where practical, should be designed to adoptable standards.

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# Agenda Item 5

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder

16 October 2013

**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Housing

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### Homelessness Strategy 2013-18

#### Purpose

1. To present the new Homeless Strategy for 2013-18 and associated policies for the consideration of the Housing Portfolio Holder.
2. This is a key decision because it is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority and it was first published in the March 2013 Forward Plan.

#### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder:
  - Approves the Homeless Strategy and action plan for 2013-18 Appendix A and B
  - Approves the Discharging Duty Policy Appendix C
  - Approves the Reconnections Policy Appendix D

#### Reasons for Recommendations

4. The proposed strategy and action plan represents a number of actions to help address the anticipated challenges faced by the housing advice and options service. These are expected to include:
  - An increase in applications and people seeking assistance.
  - The impact of the Welfare Reforms.
  - Increased difficulty in accessing affordable housing options, including the private rented sector.

#### Background

5. The Council are required to produce a homeless strategy every 5 years. The current strategy was published in 2008 and covers the 5 year period up to 2013. Since the introduction of this homeless strategy the Council have made significant improvements, including:
  - (a) Increase in homeless prevention.
  - (b) Reduction in the numbers in temporary accommodation.
  - (c) The Home-link Sub Regional choice based lettings scheme.
6. However, the economic climate has changed significantly since 2008 and, following a change in government, new housing policy and changes to the benefits system are expected to have a high impact on the housing advice and options service. During

the last year of the previous strategy (2012/13) the Council have seen an increase in homeless applications and those needing temporary accommodation, at the same time as homeless prevention is decreasing due to more difficulties accessing the private rented sector.

7. A review of homelessness in the district was conducted prior to the homelessness strategy and the findings reported in the Homelessness Strategy Review February 2013.
8. The Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities the power to discharge their duty to secure accommodation for homeless applicants through the private sector, for those accepted as homeless after 9<sup>th</sup> November. This policy is set out in Appendix C.
9. The Discharge of Duty Policy sets out the different ways in which the Council may discharge its homeless duties, including through the private rented sector. It also covers the circumstances that will be taken into account when assessing accommodation as suitable, taking into account the needs of the household and the limited supply of accommodation.
10. In addition due to the increase of households in temporary accommodation, it has been necessary for officers to actively manage cases in order to discharge our duties. The new lettings policy (Implemented in April 2013) enables the Council to place bids on behalf of homeless applicants or direct lets to applicants in order to discharge our duties and free up temporary accommodation (minimising the need to use expensive and unsuitable Bed & Breakfast accommodation).
11. In 2012 the CLG granted the sub region funding to work together to prevent rough sleeping and homelessness amongst single applicants. The sub regional authorities are continuing to work together to provide accommodation for single people where they are connected to the sub region. For those not connected to the sub region, we are adopting a Reconnections Policy to help reconnect those at risk of rough sleeping with the area they are connected to. This policy is set out in Appendix D

### **Considerations**

12. The main objectives of the homeless strategy set out in Appendix A are:
  - The prevention of homelessness
  - Ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available to people who are, or who may become homeless.
13. The new action plan includes specific actions to address a range of issues many of which link to other strategic work of the Council and County Council. These are set out in detail in Appendix B and include:
  - Floating support – to monitor the impact of increased demand and identify any gaps in the service provided by the County Council contract.
  - Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) policy – to monitor the revised policy to take into account the welfare reforms.
  - Mental health – in response to the increase in the proportion of priority need, to work with mental health services to try to prevent homelessness.
  - Provision of money advice and support in relation to finance and budgetary assistance to link to the development of a financial inclusion strategy.
  - Work with sub regional partners using government funding for single homelessness.



- Monitor the effectiveness of the new reconnections and discharge of duty policies.
- Assess the impact of the King Street Home Finder scheme.
- Manage the transition to the new Robson Court hostel with Sanctuary Housing.
- Investigate the feasibility of a foyer scheme for young people with the County Council.

### **Options**

14. The Portfolio Holder has the option to approve the Homeless Strategy, action plan and linked policies regarding discharge of duty and reconnections.
15. The Portfolio Holder may choose to recommend amendments to the strategy and policies attached.
16. The Council will risk being in breach of its statutory obligations to have an active Homeless Strategy if no strategy is approved.

### **Implications**

17. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:

#### ***Financial***

18. An increase in resources may be required if the demand for the service increases. The actions relating to homeless prevention will work towards minimising any increase as much as possible.

#### ***Legal***

19. The strategy is a legal requirement, as is the provision of homelessness assistance.

#### ***Staffing***

20. It is anticipated that the activities included within the strategy will be carried out by the existing staffing resources, although demand for the service will be monitored closely.

#### ***Risk Management***

21. There is a risk that external factors in the housing market may impact on the anticipated outcomes of the homeless strategy.

#### ***Equality and Diversity***

22. The strategy aims to address diversity and equality issues within the service.

### **Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)**

23. A 12 week consultation period ran between July and October 2013, and during this time a stakeholder event was held, which supported the Homeless Strategy.

Feedback included:

- Should we be doing more for separated fathers (public consultation)?
- Could there be more sub regional work around under occupation (stakeholder event)?
- Positive support for the need to increase temporary accommodation and other actions identified (stakeholder event).

The Youth Council has not responded to the consultation.

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

**Aim 6** - Increase the supply of temporary accommodation, prioritising council-owned properties whilst not restricting options in other sectors.

24. The homeless strategy and action plan includes actions to help us minimise the need for temporary accommodation, through homeless prevention and increase the supply of temporary accommodation for those who become homeless.

### **Background Papers**

South Cambridgeshire District Council - Homelessness Review February 2013

**Report Author:** Sue Carter – Head of Housing Advice and Options (Job share)  
Telephone: (01954) 713044

# DRAFT



## HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2013-2018

If you would like a larger print version of this Strategy or would like a copy translated in another language please let us know and we will be happy to arrange this for you free of charge.

To be approved by Housing Portfolio Holder: October 2013

## CONTENTS

<b>The Homelessness Strategy 2008/2013</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Introduction.....	3
2. National and Local Policy .....	4-9
2.1 National .....	4
2.2 Sub Regional .....	6
2.3 Local.....	6
3. Outcome of the Homelessness Review .....	10
4. Priorities and Objectives .....	11-13
4.1 Corporate Priorities.....	11
4.2 Prevention of Homelessness .....	12
4.3 Increasing Temporary Accommodation.....	13
5. Monitoring and Review of the Strategy .....	14
6. Contact Details .....	14
7. Acknowledgements .....	14

### **The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan**

### **The Homelessness Review 20013/18**

# SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

# HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

## 2013-2018

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory duty on all Local Authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and, based on the findings of this review, to develop and publish a strategy to tackle and prevent homelessness. The Strategy must be renewed at least every 5 years. In addition, Section 153 of the Localism Act 2011 requires that Local Authorities must have regard to their Allocation Scheme and their Tenancy Strategy when developing or modifying their Homelessness strategy.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Homelessness Strategy was last published in 2008 and is now due for renewal. During the life of the 2008-13 strategy, the emphasis was on reducing homelessness and the Council's use of temporary accommodation through increased prevention and partnership working. Since its publication, the Council has seen:

- An initial decrease in numbers living in temporary accommodation, followed by a recent and continued increase. (57 households at the end of 07/08, falling to 26 households at its lowest in June 2011 compared to 42 households at the end of 2012/13).
- Fewer households accepted as homeless at the start of the 5 year period (82 in 2008/09 falling to 64 in 2009/10). A subsequent and steady increase in homeless acceptances during the latter part of the 5 year period (102 in 2012/13).

The initial reduction in homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation was primarily the result of the greater emphasis on preventative work undertaken by the Housing Advice and Options Team and the continued use of initiatives such as the Settled Homes Scheme. However, since 2010/11 homeless prevention options have become harder to achieve which is illustrated by the rise in homeless acceptances and the increase in demand for temporary accommodation. This is mainly due to changes in the way that Local Housing Allowance is calculated which has meant that the majority of private rented sector properties in the district are no longer affordable to households on low incomes or who are reliant on welfare benefits. In addition, the impact of recent welfare reforms will mean that it becomes more difficult for residents to meet their housing needs with their own resources.

In 2010 the Audit Commission inspected the Council's Strategic Housing Service, including the provision of its statutory Homelessness Functions and Housing Advice. Overall the service was considered to be 'Good' and recognition was given to the fact that the Council had a range of successful initiatives to prevent homelessness as well as good management of the sub-regional choice based lettings process.

Although prevention work will continue to play an important role in the Council's service, it is recognised that the current economic climate, the shortage of affordable private rented housing and the impact of the welfare reforms will make it harder to

achieve the success rates previously attained. The new strategy will also seek to minimise the use of Bed and Breakfast and improve the quality of temporary accommodation available.

This document will therefore replace the 2008 Homelessness Strategy and is split into three parts: the Strategy, the Action Plan and Review. The Strategy will focus on the two key elements of continued homeless prevention and increasing the supply of temporary accommodation. Partnership working will be central to the success of the strategy.

New actions and priorities resulting from the Review will help to shape the strategic approach for the next five years, taking into account National, Regional and Local Priorities.

In developing the Homelessness Strategy, key stakeholders within all sectors, including voluntary organisations, service providers, housing associations, private landlords and other statutory organisations have been involved, primarily through participation on-line but also through attendance at a consultation event. Their continued support and involvement will be crucial to the success of this Strategy's implementation. Full acknowledgement of all those who have assisted is published at the end of this Strategy.

## 2. NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY

### 2.1 National:

Since publication of the last Homelessness Strategy there have been fundamental changes to housing policy, as well as an overhaul of the welfare system. Alongside this, the economic downturn has meant a rise in unemployment, fewer new homes being built and an increase in the number of homeless applications being made.

In brief, the table below identifies some of the key changes to policy that have a direct impact on the way in which local housing authorities deliver allocations, lettings and homelessness services.

<b>Changes to the Local Housing Allowance Arrangements</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates capped and set at the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of local rents (April 2011)</li> <li>• Increased non-dependant deductions (April 2011)</li> <li>• £15 weekly excess removed where the tenant's rent is less than their LHA (April 2011)</li> <li>• Increasing the shared accommodation room rate age threshold to 35 from 25 (January 2012)</li> </ul>
<b>Localism Act 2011</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability for local authorities to discharge the homelessness duty in the private rented sector in accordance with the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012</li> <li>• Greater freedom for local authorities to set their own policies about who should qualify to go on the waiting list for social housing in their area.</li> </ul>

## Welfare Reform Act 2012

- Social sector size criteria for working age tenants (April 2013) – those considered to have a ‘spare’ bedroom will face a reduction in housing benefit
- Benefit cap for working age people (from April 2013) – a cap on the total amount of benefit that working age people receive so it does not exceed the average wage for working families
- Personal Independence Payment (from April 2013) – replacing Disability Living Allowance based on how a person’s condition affects them, not the condition they have
- Universal Credit (from October 2013) – bringing together a range of working age benefits into a single payment, including housing support
- Direct Payments in the Social Sector (from October 2013) – housing costs within Universal Credit will be paid directly to individuals in the social sector, rather than the current system of payments direct to landlords
- Localising Council Tax Support (April 2013) – replacing Council Tax Benefit, councils are required to design and adopt a scheme based on a national framework that protects vulnerable pensioners

## NHS and Social Care Act 2012

- Includes a new and important role for local authorities from April 2013 in helping to shape services and deliver public health outcomes, as well as the establishment of local clinical commissioning groups that will oversee the bulk of NHS investment in a local area

The Government have introduced a number of measures to deal with increased homelessness, with priority given to help rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness to stay off the streets. **‘No Second Night Out’** published in 2011 sets out clear expectations for local authorities about developing joint approaches to ending rough sleeping.

Additional funding has been made available between 2011 and 2015 to help protect the most vulnerable and support them to adapt to changing welfare reforms.

- £400 million available to local councils and voluntary sector partners to spend on homeless prevention, such as rent deposit schemes and mediation services.
- £18.5 million funding for local councils to prevent homelessness, ensuring nobody is turned away without clear and useful advice when they are most in need.
- A further £12.5 million provided to Crisis to help find stable private rented accommodation for single homeless people, including priority groups such as recovering drug users and ex-offenders.
- £20 million to Homeless Link for a homelessness transition fund to help voluntary sector frontline services.
- £200 million over 5 years from 2013 for specialist housing for older and disabled people .

**‘Making Every Contact Count’** published by the Government in 2012 supports local authorities to deliver a Gold Standard homeless prevention service. It sets out 10 challenges for local authorities which are designed to ensure that homelessness prevention and support to vulnerable households is as effective as possible. Funding

of £1.7 million will be available from May 2013 to help support local authorities to meet the Gold Standard.

The national context of policy change is unprecedented, with local authorities facing both huge challenges to the housing sector as well as opportunities to shape services providing support and advice to the most vulnerable.

We will continue to seek additional funding from central government wherever possible to ensure we can provide the support needed to help residents through these changing times.

## **2.2 Sub regional:**

The sub regional Homelessness Group agreed a sub-regional action plan in 2008, which has largely been completed and included:

- The implementation of a housing advice and homelessness database across the sub region – this is a module that links to the Home-Link scheme through the Locata IT system.
- Floating support – participated in the Supporting People review of floating support services.
- Identified initiatives to develop training and employment opportunities for applicants – links established with Job Centre Plus and information can be accessed via the sub regional Home-Link scheme.
- Court desk provision – all areas in the sub region are covered by a court desk service.
- Review of the Home-Link CBL scheme – reviewed after one year of implementation to ensure the scheme met the needs of the sub region. This was reported to management board in March 2009.
- Cambridgeshire-wide Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Cambridgeshire-wide protocol with social care for homeless young people. Has been successfully implemented and recently reviewed.

The Sub Regional Homelessness group will be working on a new sub regional action plan to help address the current priorities for all the Local Authorities including the impact of the welfare reforms and government funding that has been granted to the sub region to prevent rough sleeping and assist single homelessness. The new action plan should be available later in 2013.

## **2.3 Local:**

The Homelessness Strategy sits within the Council's Housing Strategy which was published in March 2012. This sets out the overall vision and key aims for the housing service over the next 5 years. Putting the HEART into Housing encapsulates the key themes of the Housing Strategy:

**H**Health and Wellbeing

**E**conomic Growth and Development

**A**ffordable Housing

**R**educing Fuel Poverty and promoting energy efficiency

**T**ackling Homelessness



### **Overall Housing Vision**

To be the best housing service by providing good quality housing across all tenures that is accessible to all – that enhances residents' quality of life, their health and wellbeing, that supports economic growth and social opportunities, alongside improved energy security and reduced carbon footprints.

#### Key Aims:

- To deliver a range of homes that are affordable to all and where people want to live that will support economic growth and economic activity
- To improve the living conditions across all tenures, to help make homes more energy efficient and to reduce fuel poverty
- To promote safe and sustainable communities, ensuring people are living in the right homes at a time that is right for them
- To promote fully inclusive communities and to work with partners to provide support and assistance to enable independent living
- To reduce homelessness through being proactive in preventative measures and ensuring there is sufficient suitable accommodation available to people who are, or who may become homeless
- To work in partnership to provide housing advice so that people understand their housing options, help them to sustain their current home or access alternative suitable accommodation
- To provide an Affordable Homes Service that is transparent and accountable, that is developed in consultation with our tenants, partner agencies and the wider public and demonstrates value for money

The Council remains a stock holding authority following the 'No' vote to transfer to a housing association in 2009. Since that time there has been a change in direction regarding Council housing finances, with the Council's landlord functions becoming self-financing from April 2012. This has meant that the Council took on a debt of £205M but is able to keep its full rental income, which has enabled the Council to reinvest into existing stock and begin to build new affordable homes. The Council's New Build Strategy identifies up to 200 new homes to be built in the next 10 years, helping to provide long term solutions for homeless families rather than temporary accommodation options.

The Homelessness Strategy cannot be developed in isolation but has important links and reliance to other policy documents and strategies:

### **Allocations Policy (amended April 2013)**

- Local connection required to be eligible to register with Home-Link
- Greater priority to Armed Forces Personnel
- Increase priority for households in social housing who are under-occupying
- New assessments of overcrowding based on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) regulations; but with higher priority awarded
- Size of property applicants are eligible to bid for in line with LHA criteria
- Homeless applicants – removal of 3 month 'bidding' period, can offer direct let automatically to discharge duty
- Housing Options Assessment – online registration notifying applicants if eligible to register or alternative housing options available to them

It is too early to say what impact the changes to the Allocations Policy may have. We will monitor this over the coming year to ensure homeless households are not adversely affected.

### Tenancy Strategy (published October 2012)

The key elements to the Tenancy Strategy include:

- **Affordable Rents** – as part of the Council’s enabling role we would wish to have early discussions around the level and mix of Affordable Rent and recommend that Affordable Rents should not be set higher than the Local Housing Allowance rates for this area.
- **Conversion to Affordable Rents** – Registered Providers are asked to take a strategic approach to conversions and consider areas where it would provide for a more balanced community, especially in areas where there are high levels of social rent.
- **Stock Disposals** – generally we would support stock rationalisation where the housing stock is offered to another Registered Provider as affordable housing or where a property has insurmountable management or maintenance problems.
- **Use of Fixed Term/Flexible Tenancies** – the Council supports the use of fixed term/flexible tenancies for the primary purpose of making best use of existing stock. As a minimum 5 year tenancies should be offered to ensure tenants have a degree of stability in their home and are able to feel part of and contribute to their community.
- **Expiry of a Fixed Term/Flexible Tenancy** – the Council is committed to ensuring that the use of fixed term/flexible tenancies and their termination does not lead to an increase in homelessness and therefore expect registered providers to generally offer tenancy renewal or alternative accommodation.

Affordable rents and fixed term tenancies have been in existence since April 2012. Close monitoring of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme would indicate that the changes have not altered the bidding pattern of applicants. The Council’s enabling team work closely with registered providers to ensure ‘Affordable Rent’ properties remain affordable within the District.

### Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – People who are homeless or at the risk of homeless (February 2010)

JSNA’s are undertaken by the County Council and PCT and involve local authorities and other key partner organisations providing services. Recommendations from the Homelessness JSNA include:

- Development of a multi-agency steering group to strengthen joint commissioning to address the needs of chronically excluded adults, single homeless and rough sleepers
- Develop methods to encourage service user engagement in the commissioning process. Service users’ experience and perceived needs should be embedded in the care planning process
- Develop integrated information systems, data collection tools and ways of unifying individual client records so they can be used and accessed across services
- Develop services enabling prevention of homelessness and early intervention for the newly homeless to improve individual lives and to reduce overall homelessness
- Develop a strategy to address the health needs of the homeless population in Cambridgeshire as part of a joint commissioning strategy

### Supporting People

The Supporting People programme has now ended. Housing related support services for vulnerable adults are now commissioned, funded and monitored by the Adult Social Care Directorate within Cambridgeshire County Council. The housing related support services are aimed at helping people live independently in their homes. The change from Supporting People is still in a transitional phase and it is uncertain what impact this will have on future funding available to support those

facing homelessness.

#### **Cambridgeshire Association to Commission Health Ltd (CATCH)**

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are groups of GPs that from April 2013 are the statutory bodies responsible for designing local health services in England. Every GP practice will have to be a member of a CCG.

Local Commissioning Groups (LCGs) are smaller groups of GP practices with a focus on more local issues than the CCG. CATCH is one of the main 8 LCGs within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG that operates within South Cambridgeshire.

CATCH have a crucial role to play in setting the shape of health care delivery in the District. The Council will work closely with them to ensure that the health needs of homeless households and vulnerable adults are taken into consideration when commissioning services.

#### **Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board and Network**

The Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board and Network brings together leaders from local organisations which have a strong influence on health and wellbeing, including the commissioning of health, social care and public health services.

Its focus is on planning the right services for Cambridgeshire and securing the best possible health and wellbeing outcomes for all residents.

The work of the Board is guided by the Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-17. The Strategy sets out the priorities the Health and Wellbeing Board and Network feel are the most important for local people:

- Ensure a positive start to life for children, young people and their families
- Support older people to be independent, safe and well
- Encourage healthy lifestyles and behaviours in all actions and activities while respecting people's personal choices
- Create a safe environment and help to build strong communities , wellbeing and mental health
- Create a sustainable environment in which communities can flourish
- Work together effectively

The above list of National and Local Policies is not intended to be comprehensive but identifies those that are most relevant to the formulation of the new Homelessness Strategy and Review.

### 3. OUTCOME OF THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

The Homelessness Review that supplements the Homelessness Strategy gives a detailed analysis of homelessness in the District over the last 5 years and the types of support available.

South Cambridgeshire District has experienced similar trends to the national homelessness picture. In the last two years, homeless applications have increased and the Council is now in the unfortunate position of having to use bed & breakfast again as temporary accommodation. Affordability is an acute issue for residents in South Cambridgeshire, with property prices continuing to increase and a general lack of affordable private rented accommodation. It is anticipated that the changes to the welfare reforms are likely to have significant impacts on vulnerable households across the District and we have already introduced new ways of working to try to help mitigate the impact, such as money advice and the provision of single person accommodation.

The outcome of the Review identified six key themes to be taken forward over the next 5 year Homelessness Strategy:

#### **Homeless Prevention**

- Increased provision of advice and support in relation to finances and budgetary assistance.
- Access to affordable private rented sector housing in the district.
- Access to accommodation in the District to cater for single people, especially those with additional support needs.
- Increased focus on prevention of homelessness for those suffering with a mental health problem.
- Review and improve accessibility of information through the use of social media and other formats.

#### **Increase provision of Temporary Accommodation**

- Additional provision for good quality temporary accommodation

## 4. PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

### 4.1 Corporate Priorities

#### Relevant Corporate Aims:

- *We will make sure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for our residents.*
- *We will listen to and engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure we deliver first class services and value for money*

#### Relevant Council Actions:

- *Ensure best use of Council assets and benefit from opportunities to achieve efficiencies from working together*
- *Increase the supply of temporary accommodation, prioritising council owned properties whilst not restricting options in other sectors*
- *Ensure benefits reform is implemented as smoothly and effectively as possible.*

#### Service Objective:

*‘To provide housing advice to enable people to understand their housing options, to sustain and improve their current home or access alternative good quality and suitable housing’.*

At a corporate level, the Council recognises the need to increase the supply of temporary accommodation, to ensure the smooth implementation of welfare reform and the benefits of working together. It is important that the Corporate Aims and actions for the Council support the themes and priorities identified in the Homelessness Review to ensure best use of resources and it is clear that these links exist.

Each of the key themes identified in the Homelessness Review has strands of work, or actions, associated with it and these are contained in the Homeless Strategy Action Plan. The themes and associated actions can be broadly categorised under the two main aims of:

- Continued homeless prevention
- Increasing temporary accommodation

In addition, two other important elements run through the Review, Strategy and Action Plan and cut across both of the key aims above. These cross cutting themes are:

- importance of continued partnership working and
- the need to continually assess and improve service provision

Partnership working is recognised as central to achieving both the prevention and temporary accommodation actions whilst the Council will seek to achieve continuous improvement by completing and learning from Peer Reviews in relation to the Gold Standard for Homeless Services. A corporate commitment to the prevention of homelessness is an important element in achieving the Gold Standard and this can be evidenced through the Corporate Aims and Council Actions relating to Homeless services and provision.

#### **4.2 The Prevention of Homelessness:**

The housing advice and options team continue to receive high levels of contact from residents needing housing advice. The Council continue to offer and pursue various homeless prevention schemes and initiatives; however, we recognise with the changes to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the welfare reforms, our continued success in this area will be even more challenging. Early intervention is therefore seen as vital to ensure we minimise the expected increase in homelessness.

We will aim to continue to build on successful initiatives already implemented such as our settled homes scheme and provision of money advice through the CAB and we will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to achieve this.

Through the Homelessness Review and the changing housing environment we have identified the following areas to address to maintain and increase levels of homeless prevention:

- Floating support – monitor the impact of demand from our clients for floating support and work with the floating support provider to address how this is best met.
- Discretionary Housing payments – review the policy to take into account the changes to the LHA and ensure we can help the short terms needs that will help to prevent homelessness.
- Under Occupation – through the changes to the LHA affecting social rented tenants SCDC has recruited an Under-Occupation officer to work with tenants affected and help to provide solutions for any shortfall in rent.
- Mental Health – due to an increase in clients with mental health support needs, work with partner agencies to help address this.
- Provision of money advice and support in relation to finance and budgetary assistance – continue to work with the CAB to provide dedicated money advice to prevent homelessness and investigate credit unions and the options available that may help people on low incomes to help manage their money more effectively and meet their housing costs.
- Single homelessness – work with our partners in the sub region to implement a single homeless service scheme, with the aim of providing an offer of accommodation, through either emergency placement or an offer in the private rented sector.

- Reconnections policy – adopt a reconnections policy, in line with our sub regional partners, to prevent rough sleeping and to enable assistance to be directed to those with a connection to the sub region.
- King Street Home-finder scheme – establish the success of this scheme and future funding opportunities.
- Information – review information available to residents including through social media, on the web site and through leaflets and letters.

#### **4.3 Temporary accommodation:**

Since the previous Homeless Strategy we are in a very different position in relation to temporary accommodation. Through effective homeless prevention initiatives temporary accommodation had reduced significantly. However, with the introduction of the welfare reforms, homelessness is now on the increase and there is an urgent need for more temporary accommodation.

Following the Homelessness Review we have identified a number of actions to take forward.

- Redevelopment of Robson Court – working with Sanctuary to redevelop the Robson Court hostel site. The current hostel provided shared accommodation for 16 households. Maintaining the building is not cost effective compared to other forms of temporary accommodation, in addition to the negative impact living in shared accommodation can have on families and children. The new development will provide 30 units of self-contained temporary accommodation, replacing both the 16 units at Robson Court, 4 units at the Bungalow (to enable Sanctuary to manage the temporary accommodation on one site) and a further 10 additional units to help alleviate the need to use B&B.
- Options for the Bungalow hostel – Once the Robson Court development has been completed we will need to consider the on-going use of the Bungalow which is owned by the Council. At that stage we will consider the need for additional temporary accommodation, specific provision for a particular group or converting the property back into general needs accommodation.
- Empty Homes scheme – continuation of the empty homes scheme, with the aim of purchasing 5-8 properties during 2013/14.
- Foyer – work with partners to investigate the potential for a Foyer scheme located in South Cambridgeshire for young people to live and gain valuable training or work experience.
- Impact of the welfare reforms on the Private Sector Leasing scheme – work with King Street Housing to monitor the impact of the welfare reforms. This will include proposed changes to the payment of management fees for this form of accommodation and impact of direct payments under the Universal Credit scheme.
- Discharge of duty policy – policy to collate the various options for discharging our homeless duties, including into the private rented sector.



## 5. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

The Homelessness Strategy Review Group will review the strategy on an annual basis and will share the review findings with the Council's wider Housing Services Management Team. It is expected that some actions may evolve over the lifetime of the Strategy and any such changes will be agreed by the Review Group and reported to the Management Team before being incorporated into the Action Plan. The Housing Portfolio Holder will monitor progress against the Action Plan annually.

Key objectives within the Strategy are also monitored on a quarterly basis through the Council's corporate Performance Indicator System (CorVu). The two areas of performance monitored via CorVu are:

- Preventing Homelessness
- Numbers in temporary accommodation

In addition, the Council has committed to reducing its expenditure on B&B placements. In 2013/14 a transitory target has been set to ensure B&B expenditure does not exceed £4,000 per calendar month (which represents roughly a 50% reduction on the 2012/13 levels of expenditure). It is anticipated that the target will be reduced further throughout the life of the strategy and will be set every 12 months as part of the annual review of the Homelessness Strategy.

## 6. CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any comments about this Strategy or would like more information about ways in which homelessness can be tackled in South Cambridgeshire please contact:

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## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

South Cambridgeshire District Council would like to acknowledge and thank all organisations that have contributed to the Homelessness Review and development of the Homelessness Strategy by assisting in the completion of questionnaires as well as providing valuable input throughout the consultation process. Full acknowledgements will be included once the Consultation process is completed.



## Homeless strategy 2013-2018 action plan (to be reviewed annually)

Action	Target Date	Lead officer	Comments/ updates
<b>Homeless prevention:</b>			
Floating support – Monitor impact of increased demand and identify gaps in service.	March 2014	Housing Advice and Homelessness Manager	On-going meetings established
DHP policy – revised policy to take into account welfare reforms	July 2013	Head of Housing Advice and Options	Will be reviewed after 6 months
Under occupation – offer alternative options to prevent homelessness for those affected	January 2015	Under Occupation Officer	Under occupation officer appointed in January 2013
Mental health – in response to increase in proportion of priority need, work with mental health services to try to prevent homelessness	March 2014	Housing Advice and Homelessness Manager	
Provision of money advice and support in relation to finance and budgetary assistance.	March 2014	Head of Housing Advice and Options	
Sub regional work using government funding for single homelessness.	March 2014	Head of Housing Advice and Options	
Reconnections policy	October 2013	Head of Housing Advice and Options	

Establish impact of the King Street Home finder scheme	March 2014	Head of Housing Advice and Options	
Housing advice information	September 2014	Housing Advice and Homelessness Manager	Review information available to residents including through social media, on the website and through leaflets and letters
<b>Increase provision of Temporary accommodation:</b>			
Redevelopment of Robson Court	March 2015	Head of Housing Strategy and Development/ Head of Housing Advice and Options	Site transferred to Sanctuary. Work due to start on site in September.
Consider options for the Bungalow	July 2015	Head of Housing Advice and Options	To consider options in 2014/15 in preparation for hostel provision all moving to the new redeveloped site at Robson Court.
Empty Homes Scheme – purchase additional properties to use as temporary accommodation	April 2014	Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader	To date, two properties purchased

Investigate feasibility of a Foyer scheme	March 2014	Head of Housing Strategy and Development/ Head of Housing Advice and Options	Visited Wisbech Foyer. Potential site identified. Investigating options for revenue funding.
Assess impact of the welfare reforms on the PSL scheme	March 2014	Head of Housing Advice and Options	Awaiting government announcement about how the management fees on PSL properties will be paid. King Street to monitor impact of direct payment when Universal Credit is introduced
Discharge of duty policy	October 2013	Head of Housing Advice and Options	Policy to incorporate private rented tenancies
<b>Gold Standard</b>	March 2015	Head of Housing Advice and Options	Peer reviews to be undertaken – awaiting new guidance
<b>Sub regional Homeless Strategy Action plan</b>	December 2013	Head of Housing Advice and Options	Sub regional actions to be collated and monitored at the sub regional homeless group.

Date of Action Plan – July 2013

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## Appendix C

# Policy on the Discharge of Duty to Homeless Applicants owed a duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996

**Version 1**

**Dated: October 2013**



**Related documents:**      **Homelessness Strategy**  
   **SCDC Tenancy Policy**  
   **Lettings Policy**

## Contents

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Background</b>
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Discharge of Duty</b>
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Home-Link Offers</b> Offers of a Social Rented Tenancy Applicants unsuitable to be a tenant Applicants Choices
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Private Sector Offers</b>
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>Offer Hierarchy</b>
<b>Section 6</b>	<b>Offers, Refusals, acceptances and reviews of suitability</b>
<b>Section 7</b>	<b>Reapplication following loss of accommodation (private sector offers)</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>	



## Section 1: Background

The Localism Action 2011 has amended the 1996 Housing Act and produced new statutory regulations. The new regulations change the way in which Local Authorities can discharge their homeless duties to households accepted as statutorily homeless under Section 193 of the 1996 Housing Act.

Local Authorities have a duty to secure suitable alternative accommodation for households owed a duty under Section 193. This is usually taken to be social housing. However, the Localism Act allows suitable 'Private Sector Offers' to be used to end the main homeless duty.

This policy sets out how South Cambridgeshire District Council will apply the legislation in respect of discharging its homelessness duty. The prevailing housing demand and supply pressures in the area have been taken into consideration in producing the policy.

This policy will apply to all applicants who South Cambridgeshire District Council accepts a homelessness duty towards. The policy will apply irrespective of whether the applicant has been placed into temporary accommodation, is likely to be placed into temporary accommodation or is able to secure their own temporary accommodation.

## Section 2: Discharge of Duty

The Council will discharge its duties to those accepted as homeless in the following ways:

- An offer of accommodation the applicant has successfully bid for through the Home-Link scheme.
- An offer of accommodation, where a bid has been placed on their behalf by Council staff, and this bid has been successful.
- A direct let to a social rented tenancy.
- An offer of a private rented tenancy.
- A offer of supported accommodation, where this is available and is considered to be the most appropriate type of accommodation for the applicant.

The Council will also discharge its duties if the following circumstances occur:

- An applicant refuses a suitable offer of temporary accommodation.
- An applicant voluntarily ceases to occupy their temporary accommodation.
- The household is no longer eligible for homeless assistance.
- An applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation.
- An applicant becomes intentionally homeless from their temporary accommodation.



## Section 3: Home-Link Offers

All households accepted as homeless (excluding those assessed as being unsuitable to be a tenant) will be registered on the housing register and able to bid for properties advertised through the Home-Link scheme, in line with the lettings policy.

### ***Offers of a social rented tenancy:***

In order to manage the demand for temporary accommodation homeless applicants who have been accepted may be made an offer of accommodation they have not bid for. This may occur in two ways:-

- *Bids placed on behalf of applicants:*

Bids may be placed on behalf of applicants onto advertised properties considered suitable for the applicant and their families needs.

- *Direct lets:*

Properties may be offered directly to applicants. This may occur when applicants have specialist needs, need larger than average accommodation or a need to be in a specific area or have not been bidding for suitable properties.

### ***Applicant's choices:***

It is acknowledged that the District of South Cambridgeshire covers a wide geographical area and moving families from their existing location and networks can add extra stress and difficulties at an already difficult time. However, this has to be weighed up against the limited supply of housing that becomes available and the small number of properties in many individual villages.

The homeless legislation provides a safety net for families and vulnerable single people and our priority is to provide a suitable home for each household. As such we cannot commit to providing an applicant with their ideal choice.

When making a homeless application, applicants are therefore asked to select 25 villages, which is roughly a quarter of the district (applicants who do not select 25 villages will be considered for accommodation anywhere within the district).

Only in the most exceptional of circumstances will the Council commit to endeavouring to provide households with accommodation in a smaller geographical area. (For cases where this is agreed, this may need to be reviewed if rehousing has not proved possible within a reasonable time frame, or if the applicant's circumstances change).

The duty will cease once a suitable offer of accommodation has been made, irrespective of whether the applicant accepts or refuses the offer, provided they have been informed in writing of:





- The possible consequence of refusal or acceptance of the offer
- Their right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation

### ***Applicants unsuitable to be a tenant:***

Applicants assessed as unsuitable to be a tenant (in line with South Cambridgeshire District Council's lettings policy) will be excluded from the housing register and unable to bid on properties advertised through the Home-Link scheme. Applicants will be advised of the actions they need to take in order for the Council to reconsider this decision, which may include showing they can successfully hold a tenancy for a period of time, agreeing a payment plan to clear arrears or changing their behaviour.

Officers will work with such applicants to help to find them suitable accommodation in the private rented sector, however, it is acknowledged that this will in itself prove difficult if their past history is considered by potential landlords. Applicants will therefore need to remain in temporary accommodation in order to show their behaviour as a tenant has changed (breaches of tenancy/ licence conditions whilst in temporary accommodation may result in them becoming intentionally homeless from this temporary accommodation and the Council duties towards them being discharged).

## **Section 4: Private Sector Offers**

The Localism Act 2011 gives Local Authorities the power to discharge their duty to secure accommodation for homeless applicants by way of arrangements it has made with a Private Sector Landlord.

The introduction of this power ends the provisions to make available a "qualifying offer" of private sector accommodation that required the agreement of the applicant. From 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012, local authorities can discharge their homeless duty through an offer of a private rented sector tenancy, without the agreement of the applicant.

The duty will cease irrespective of whether the applicant accepts or refuses the offer, provided they have been informed in writing of:

- The reason they have been offered that accommodation.
- The possible consequence of refusal or acceptance of the offer.
- Their right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation, and
- The effect of a further application to a local housing authority within two years of acceptance of the offer.

South Cambridgeshire District Council recognises that the number of private rented sector properties within the District available to the Council to discharge the homelessness duty is unlikely to be of such



quantity to meet the demand from all eligible applications. Therefore the decision to offer Private Rented Sector accommodation will be made if a suitable property is available.

The suitability of private rented accommodation is considered in two parts:

- The structure and management of the property, which covers the physical condition, safety aspects and how the landlord or agent manages properties and their suitability to do so.
- Suitability of the property for the tenant, which takes into consideration the individual needs of that applicant and their household considering such factors as location, affordability and accessibility.

**Further information relating the Structure and management of the property and the suitability of the property for the tenant is contained in Appendix 1 and 2**

### Section 5: Offer Hierarchy

Bids placed on behalf of applicants to advertised properties through the Home-Link scheme, will be prioritised through the lettings policy. In the case of Direct lets, or offers of private rented properties, the Council may determine that a suitable property best meets the needs of more than one applicant, in such circumstances the accommodation currently occupied will also be considered to determine which applicant is prioritised for a private rented sector offer. Accommodation currently occupied is ranked as below, where 1 is the highest priority. In addition to this, consideration will also be given as to the length of time an applicant has been housed in temporary accommodation.



1. In Bed and Breakfast
2. Awaiting temporary accommodation
3. In temporary hostel accommodation
4. Own arrangements
5. In self contained temporary accommodation

### Section 6: Offers, Acceptances, Refusals and Reviews of Suitability

Where the applicant has been offered accommodation via the Home-Link scheme, if the applicant is considering refusing the property and, after discussion with their caseworker, the property is still considered to be suitable, a formal offer letter must be sent.

Notification of any offer (including a direct let or offer of privately rented property) will be made to the applicant by the Council in writing. The notification will clearly state the address, size, type and rent of the property. The applicant will be notified of the likely consequences of refusing the property and their right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation. Applicants will be strongly advised to accept the offer whilst a review is carried out, so that they still have accommodation available to them in



the event the Council's original decision is upheld. Should the offer of accommodation subsequently be considered to be unsuitable a further offer of accommodation will be made as soon as possible.

Where the applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation the Council will cease its duty to the applicant under s.193 Housing Act 1996. Therefore, if they are currently occupying temporary accommodation this will be terminated.

Any request for a review of suitability must be made in writing to the Housing Advice and Options Team within 21 days of the date of the notice.

### **Section 7: Reapplication following Loss of Accommodation (private sector offers)**

Under section 195A Housing Act 1996, should the applicant approach the Authority as homeless within a period of two years following acceptance of the private rented sector offer under s.193 (7AA) Housing Act 1996, irrespective as to whether the approach is from the offer property or elsewhere, the Council will:

- Treat the applicant as being homeless from the date of expiry of the notice. The landlord therefore will not be required to apply to court to regain possession. The Council will confirm the validity of the notice.
- Not reinvestigate the priority need of the household as the priority need of the applicant will be retained from the date of the acceptance of a duty under 193 (2) irrespective of any change in circumstances or household composition that may affect this.
- Satisfy itself that the Applicant is eligible for assistance and did not become homeless intentionally from their last settled accommodation.

Where the applicant applies under this section and the Council accept a re-application duty, then the applicant shall be further reconsidered under this, or any successor policy, for discharge into the private or social rented sector.

### **Appendix 1 – Private rented sector offers: Structure and Management**

In order to consider a property suitable to discharge its duty, the Council will require that: -

- The tenancy is an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, for a period of at least 12 months.
- The property is in a reasonable physical condition



- All portable appliances provided by the Landlord, within the property, have been Portable Appliance Tested (PAT) within the last 12 months.
- There is a valid gas safety certificate in place and any items that have been failed have been suitably isolated and their in-operation will not create hazards within the property, such as risk of extreme cold or lack of suitable cooking facilities.
- Where appropriate, carbon monoxide protection has been provided.
- All adequate fire safety precautions have been taken, including fire alarms, fire protection measures where required, and compliance with fire regulations in respect of all furniture and furnishings.
- An Energy Performance Certificate is provided.
- The landlord or agent has provided a statement confirming that they have the right to market the property for rental and that there is no restrictive covenant or other supervening legality preventing the letting of the property.
- The landlord or agent is a fit and proper person. The Council will work to the assumption that the landlord is a fit and proper person, unless there is reason to believe that the landlord or agent has committed offences of: -
  - Fraud
  - Other dishonesty
  - Violence
  - Unlawful possession and or supply of illegal or controlled drugs
  - Offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003
  - Unlawful discrimination
  - Illegal Eviction or Harassment
- Where the property would fall under mandatory or additional HMO licencing, the landlord has licensed the premises.
- The landlord or agent must not have hindered the principles of housing law, such as failing to maintain tenancies such that Environmental Health have been required to take enforcement action.
- The Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement is a standard agreement and does not contain unfair or unreasonable terms. A copy of the tenancy agreement will be required before the tenant signs the agreement.
- The landlord lodges any deposit paid by the tenant into a tenancy deposit protection scheme.

### **Appendix 2 – Factors considered when assessing suitability of an offer**

The Council will consider the following factors when considering the suitability of accommodation for homeless applicants (this can also be applied to offers of temporary accommodation, however, the priority will be to secure accommodation for the household, and there may be limited opportunity to achieve an offer that matches an applicant's preferences).

The applicant's circumstances will be considered against available properties to ensure that best use is made of suitable properties. Where a property is suitable for more than one applicant the Council will



identify the applicant whose need is best met by the property by considering their current circumstances (see Offer Hierarchy), the length of time they have been waiting and the urgency of their situation, as well as:

- **Employment:** - The location of the property in proximity to the applicant's employment. Consideration will be given to the work patterns of the applicant, the financial impact of accessing the place of employment from the property and the availability of public transport if employment requires working unsociable hours.
- **Provision of care:** - Care received or provided by the applicant over and above immediate family support. Consideration will be given as to the level and frequency of care received or provided and the impact of using public transport to receive or give care.
- **Education:** - Educational establishments attended by the applicant and their household. In general it is deemed to be reasonable to expect a household member to change school or educational establishment. Consideration will be given to the viability of maintaining the existing educational establishment and travelling from the property. It is recognised that it may not always be appropriate to require household members in receipt of education to change educational establishments. In these circumstances careful consideration will be given to where the student is at key points in their education such as the final year before exams or where a Child has a statement which requires special educational needs to be met.
- **Medical treatment:** - Specialist medical treatment being received by the applicant or a member of their household. Consideration will be given to the proximity to the property of any medical facility attended on a regular basis for treatment, where treatment cannot be provided either in their home or closer to the property together with any additional costs which may be incurred through relocation further away from the treatment facility.
- **Support and the well-being of the household.** - Consideration will be given to any support received by the household which is not formalised support but which has a significant impact on the household's well-being.
- **Access to local services required by the household:** - Consideration will be given to any increased in travel arrangements or costs through relocation to the offered property.
- **Affordability:** - The property must be considered affordable for the household, based on their income and benefit entitlement.
- **Size of property:** - The property must be suitable for the size of the household and will be assessed under the Local Housing Allowance size criteria to ensure that there is no unreasonable shortfall in rent due to under-occupation.
- **The requirement for aids and adaptations:** - To assist the applicant or a member of their household who may be disabled or have mobility issues. Consideration will be given to the feasibility of adapting the property. Where the applicant or member of their household does not presently require adaptations but there is a likelihood that they may do so in the next 12 months then the potential need for adaptation will be considered.



- In the interests of creating sustainable communities: - Where the Council are satisfied that, in respect of an applicant, there are overriding management reasons which will not serve the interests of the applicant or the community.

## Appendix D

# Reconnections policy

**Version 1**

**Dated: October 2013**

**Related documents:      Homelessness Strategy**

## Section 1: Purpose

- 1.1 This document sets out the reconnections policy of the local authorities comprising the Cambridge sub-region. It sets out the essential definitions; it says to whom the policy applies, and within what context it applies. It explains the relationship between this reconnections policy and other national and local policies and initiatives and it explains why we think this policy is the correct approach for the Cambridge sub-region.
- 1.2 This policy outlines our broad approach, but it does not explain in detail how the reconnection process will work. That is the subject of the reconnection procedure which can be found as [Appendix Two](#).
- 1.3 This policy does **not** concern individuals to whom a council may owe a housing duty under the [Housing Act 1996](#).
- 1.4 This policy has been developed in line with the government strategy document [Vision for ending rough sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide](#), and the guidance document [Effective Action to End Homelessness](#). It is intended to support and complement the sub regional single homelessness service which will be introduced in the Cambridge sub-region in autumn 2013.
- 1.5 Each of the partner authorities in the sub-region is committed to providing the best possible service to homeless people, one element of which is a pledge to deal effectively with, and ultimately to end, rough sleeping. This approach is summed up in the four principles of 'No Second Night Out':
  1. No one new to the streets should spend a second night out;
  2. No one should make his or her home on the streets;
  3. No one should return to the streets once they have been helped off of them; and
  4. Ultimately, no one should arrive on the streets.
- 1.6 This commitment extends to those people without a local connection to the sub-region. However, the sub-region does not have the capability to find accommodation for everyone, from whatever location, who presents as a rough sleeper. Neither would an offer of services to all-comers be desirable: The No Second Night Out approach recognises that the best option for most rough sleepers is for them to be accommodated somewhere where there are pre-existing social, family, statutory or voluntary networks. It also recognizes that it is in the interests of new rough sleepers that a reconnection to such a place should be made before a person develops habits associated with a street-based lifestyle.
- 1.7 This policy is therefore intended to achieve a reasonable balance between providing for locally-connected rough sleepers, while ensuring that the non-locally connected are quickly assessed and quickly returned to their local district. Services to people without a local connection will be limited, and will



vary from authority to authority in the sub-region. However, each authority will at a minimum provide:

- basic advice and assistance;
- payment for travel back to the originating local area (where the authority considers this to be appropriate);
- Information about any projects in the area to which the person is connected which may be able to help them avoid rough sleeping in the future; and
- referral to the No Second Night Out Officer at the originating area.

## Section 2: Terms used in this document

- 1.1 **‘Sleeping rough’**. In the context of this policy, ‘sleeping rough’ means sleeping out of doors or sleeping in unsuitable accommodation (e.g. warehouses; sheds) due to the individual having no accommodation they can occupy in any local authority area in the Cambridge sub-region.
- 1.2 **‘Local connection’**. The concept of a local connection is derived from [section 199 of the Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996](#). Section 199 defines local connection in broad terms. [Section 4 of Annex 18](#) the Homelessness Guide for Local Authorities goes on to further define local connection. This reconnections policy bases its definition of local connection on that section 4. That definition is set out in [Appendix One](#).
- 1.3 **‘Reconnection’**. In the context of this policy, ‘reconnection’ means the process by which a person who is sleeping rough in the sub-region, and who has no ‘local connection’ to any of the authorities comprising the sub-region, is assisted to return to the local authority area to which they do have a connection, or to some other area, where they will not need to sleep rough.
- 1.4 **‘Cambridge sub-region’**. The Cambridge sub-regional cluster of local authorities comprises of the following:

Cambridge City Council  
South Cambridgeshire District Council  
East Cambridgeshire District Council  
Huntingdonshire District Council  
Forest Heath District Council  
St. Edmundsbury District Council  
Peterborough City Council  
Fenland District Council

## Section 3: Local Connection and access to housing advice and services

- 1.1 Under this policy, a single person not in priority need has a local connection to **all** authorities listed at 2.4 if they have a connection to **any** authority listed at 2.4.

- 1.2 A single homeless person not in priority need with a connection to any one of the authorities listed in 2.4 will be given the same access to advice and services regardless of which of the authorities listed in 2.4 they present to.
- 1.3 A single homeless person not in priority need and not connected to the sub-region may be treated as if they do have a local connection to the sub-region if it can be shown that they are at risk of harm should they have to return to their area of local connection. (See [Appendix 1 \(4\)](#)).
- 1.4 A single homeless person not in priority need and not connected to the sub-region may be treated as having a local connection to the sub-region if they have no local connection to anywhere or if they are too ill to travel to their area of local connection.
- 1.5 It is for a local authority to decide whether a person qualifies under paragraphs 3.3 or 3.4. An agency working with a person the agency considers may qualify under paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 must make a formal request for a decision to the relevant local authority. The relevant local authority is the authority for the area where the person resides at the time.
- 1.6 An application made by an agency under 3.3 or 3.4 must be made on an 'exception request form', and example of which is attached to this document. The form should be submitted to the relevant council at the earliest opportunity, and certainly within five days of the agency having started to work with the client.
- 1.7 Each application of the kind referred to in 3.3 and 3.4 will be considered on its merits. It is anticipated that the numbers of individuals achieving a local connection by this route will be small. More information about these kinds of cases can be found at [Appendix Two: Procedure](#).
- 1.8 Single homeless people not in priority need with a local connection may be eligible for the Single Homeless Service. If eligible, it may be necessary for the authority to secure short-term accommodation until permanent accommodation is available. All authorities in the sub region have agreed to provide such short term accommodation, as outlined at [Appendix 3: Emergency Accommodation Protocol](#).

## Section 4: Reconnection

- 1.1 A key principle of this policy is that it is not acceptable for people to sleep rough anywhere in the sub-region.
- 1.2 All newly-presenting rough sleepers will be quickly assessed and, if not in priority need, will have their local connection status determined according to Section 3 of this policy.
- 1.3 A person determined under Section 3 as not locally connected to the sub-region should be reconnected (see 2.3).
- 1.4 Such a person's access to local housing services will be limited to what is required to achieve the reconnection, and time-limited to how long it will reasonably take to make the assessment and make suitable arrangements with any receiving authority or agency. At the date of this policy, when more effective reconnection processes are still being developed locally and nationally, it is not possible to set a target from first encounter to reconnection that is shorter than the present one of five days. However, the intention is to steadily reduce the target to 48 hours.

- 1.5 Individuals refusing a suitable arranged reconnection may be denied further access to housing and related support services in Cambridge or its sub-region. **NB. This will not apply to arrangements made under severe weather provision.**
- 1.6 Any person returning to rough sleeping in the sub-region within 28 days of an arranged reconnection will not undergo a formal reassessment and may not be permitted access to services (subject to the same exception as in paragraph 4.4). However, contact will be maintained by an identified lead professional where ever possible.
- 1.7 Anyone returning to rough sleeping in the sub-region more than 28 days after an arranged reconnection will be reassessed from first principles.

## **Appendix One: Who is locally connected (or may be treated as if they are locally connected)?**

Under this policy, a local connection to the sub-region is gained in the following ways:

### **1. Residence**

A person is normally resident within any of the districts in the sub-region.

'Normal residence' is defined as having been resident for six of the past 12 months, or three of the past 5 years. Residence need not have been continuous.

**NB.** A period spent rough sleeping will not qualify as 'residence' for the purpose of establishing a local connection.

### **2. Employment**

A person has stable employment (i.e. not of a short-term or a casual nature) within the sub-region.

### **3. Family associations**

A person has a parent, an adult child or an adult sibling who has been resident in the district for at least 5 years. A qualifying sibling or child must have been an adult for that 5 year period.

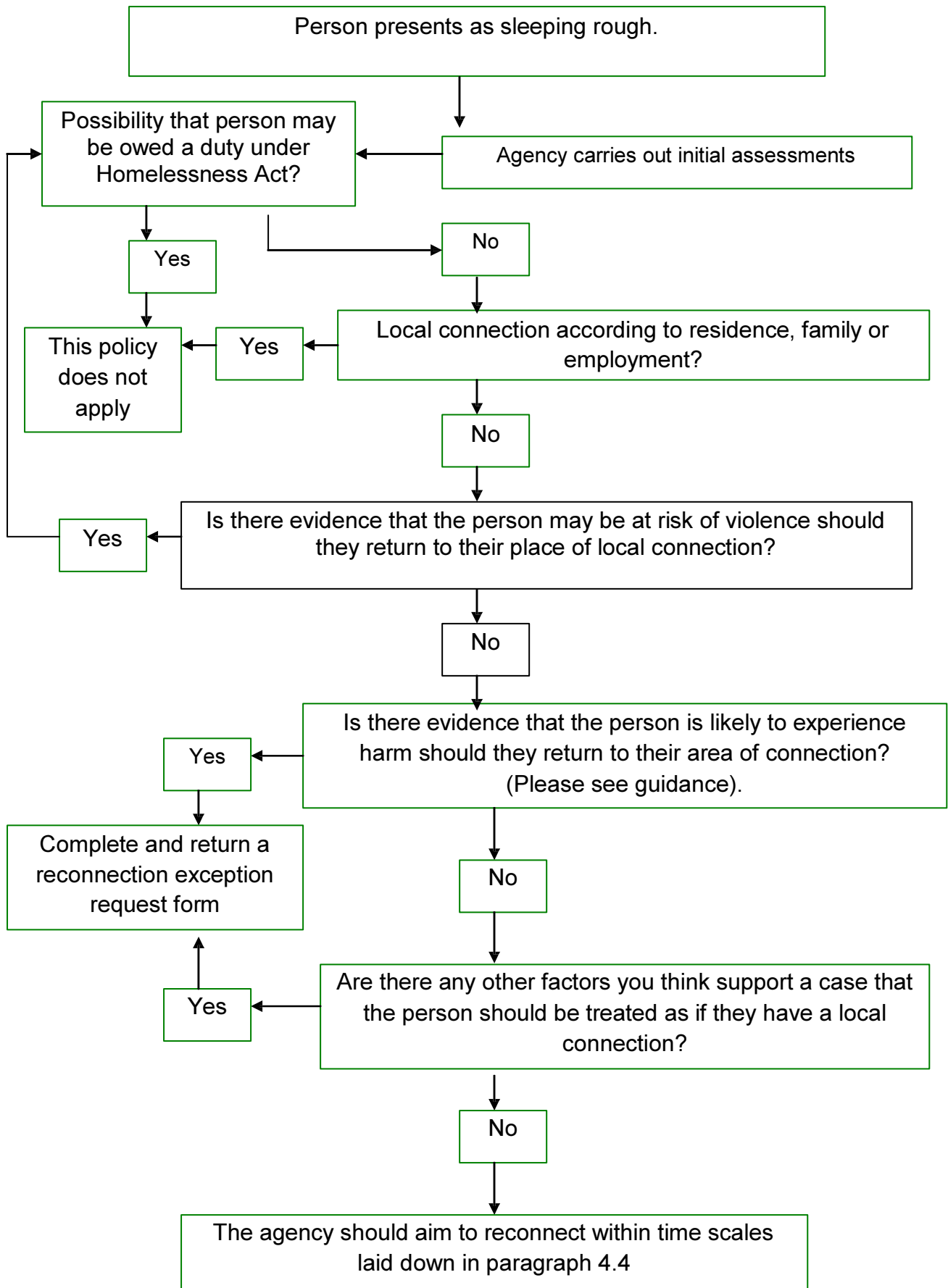
### **4. Risk of harm and other considerations**

A person without a local connection may be treated as if they have a local connection as follows:

- (i) There is evidence that a person is at risk of harm should they return to the place where they have a local connection *and* there is no other district to which they are locally connected except that district where they are at risk
- (ii) There is evidence that a person needs to remain in the sub-region for reasons of their welfare.

A claim under (4) must be made formally to, and confirmed by, a reconnection panel.

## Appendix Two (1): Reconnection Procedure Overview



## Appendix Two (2): Guidance for making a reconnection exception request

The following is intended to assist agencies when deciding to make an application on behalf of a person that relies on the exception to the local connection rule outlined in paragraph 2.8 of this policy. This guidance is not intended to be comprehensive or definitive. Agencies working with rough sleepers are encouraged to continue to take a broad view of what may be in the best interest of the client and in this way test and further refine this policy. Agency workers are encouraged to discuss any case with the housing advice partnership manager before making an application.

1. A reconnection exception request may be made at any time. For Cambridge City this should be made on the prescribed form and emailed to [james.mcwilliams@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:james.mcwilliams@cambridge.gov.uk).
2. A request may be made in order that a client may:
  - be accepted into services;
  - be allowed access to temporary beds; or
  - have a reconnection ban overturned.
3. The reconnection exception request form should be completed with as much information as possible, in particular detailing:
  - why it is necessary for the client to remain in the sub-region;
  - what work has been undertaken to facilitate a reconnection;
  - why this work has not been successful;
  - any drug and alcohol issues including scripting;
  - agencies client is involved with;
  - physical and mental health issues;
  - (if the request is made on the grounds of access to services) why these services cannot be accessed elsewhere;
  - (if the request is made on the grounds that the client needs a period to stabilise) what is planned once this is achieved;
  - current offending behaviour; and
  - longer term planning.
4. The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) makes provision for people who have left accommodation because of the threat of, or the actual experience of, violence and are vulnerable as a consequence. As an alternative to making a reconnection exception request, caseworkers may wish to consider making a homelessness application on behalf of such clients. Case workers considering this are strongly advised first to speak to the Council's housing advice team, as single homeless clients will usually not be in priority need under the Act.
5. Reconnection exception requests citing fleeing from violence should be accompanied by reasonable evidence to support the claim, such as police or former landlord reports.

### **Service standards**

1. A decision will be made on a fully completed exception request within five working days of receipt.
2. The decision will be made by the Council's housing advice partnerships manager and another senior officer assisted, as necessary, by the client's worker or some other person within support services.

# Specimen Form

## Reconnection Exception Request

<b>Date</b>		<b>Worker name:</b>	
<b>Client Name:</b>		<b>Date of Birth</b>	

Please say on what grounds this exception request is being made:

--

### Housing history (past five years)

<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date in</b>	<b>Date out with reason</b>




**Family connections and residency outside the sub region.**

**Client history**

**Please detail work done to reconnect this client**

**Why has this work failed?**

**Please provide here any further information**

<b>Future Plans</b>

<b>Decision and reasons</b>	
<b>Decision made by:</b>	
<b>Date of decision</b>	

## Appendix 3

### Single Homeless Service

#### Emergency Accommodation Protocol

This document sets out the sub regional Emergency Accommodations Protocol. It outlines the essential definitions and to whom the policy applies, and within the context to which it applies. This protocol is designed to ensure that a standardised approach and service is available to all people who qualify for access to the Single Homeless Service across all of the participating authorities in the sub region.

Single people who approach any of the Housing Advice services at any of the local authorities within the sub regional grouping will have their circumstances assessed. Where appropriate, Homeless Prevention activities will try to ensure that they do not lose their accommodation. When it has been established that the applicant will no longer be able to retain their accommodation they will be assessed to determine their suitability for the Single Homeless Service project, in accordance with the agreed procedures. The advice and assistance letter at [Appendix 4](#) will be used to outline the advice and assistance given.

Once accepted as being suitable for the project there may be a need to secure emergency accommodation until alternative accommodation can be secured through the project. It is expected that the assessor will try to negotiate an extension of stay with the client's most recent accommodation provider i.e. family or friends. The client's personal safety must be considered if securing an extension of stay. Where this is not possible emergency accommodation secured should, in the first instance, be in the locality area of the authority where the approach has been made. If emergency accommodation cannot be secured in the immediate locality then an approach to another local authority within the sub region for assistance should be made. The provision of accommodation in this respect will be offered under S192 of the Housing Act 1996 Part 7 (as amended by the 2002 Act). See [Appendix 5](#)

The use of emergency placements will be monitored and reported regularly to the sub regional homeless group.

This protocol will be periodically reviewed to ensure that it reflects the needs of the project. The review period is to be set by the sub regional homeless group.

Each of the authorities within the sub region has agreed to;

- a) Make every reasonable effort to provide emergency accommodation for all people who qualify for assistance from the Single Homeless Service project.
- b) Assist with the provision of accommodation where the originating locality area is unable to access accommodation in an emergency for qualifying people, on a reciprocal basis. Until alternative accommodation is secured through the project.
- c) Facilitate with the provision of emergency accommodation where a person is in 'fear of violence' in their originating area.
- d) Each local authority will provide the name and contact details of an Officer who will lead on provision of emergency accommodation. This may or may not be the same person who has signed the agreement.

Signed by;

Cambridge City Council.....

Name of Officer.....

Date.....

East Cambridgeshire District Council.....

Name of Officer.....

Date.....

South Cambridgeshire District Council.....

Name of Officer.....

Date.....

Huntingdonshire District Council.....

Name of Officer.....

Date.....

Forest Heath District Council..... Name of

Officer.....

Date.....

St Edmundsbury District Council..... Name

of Officer.....

Date.....

Peterborough City Council..... Name of

Officer.....

Date.....

Fenland District Council..... Name

of Officer.....

Date.....

## Appendix 4

### Advice and Assistance Letter

Name of local authority

*Address and branding to be included*

Date:

Reference number:

Dear

On {*Insert date*} you approached the Council for assistance with regard to your housing situation.

This letter sets out the advice and assistance we discussed to assist you in resolving your housing need. You may wish to take this letter to other agencies or organisations who are supporting you so that they are aware of the advice you have been given.

#### 1. Your situation

From our basic assessment we believe your situation to be as follows:

#### 2. Homelessness application

**Option 1:** *The Council has considered a homelessness application from you. The Council has concluded that it is not under a duty to accommodate you under the provisions of homelessness legislation and I would refer you to our letter that was sent to you on [date] in which the Council outlined the reasons for its decision. The letter informs you of your right to request a review of the decision.*

**Option 2:** Based on our initial assessment, we advised you that an application for assistance under the provisions of homelessness legislation was not the most appropriate way to resolve your housing situation because {insert reason}. You are still entitled to make a formal application for homelessness assistance.

**3. Meeting your immediate housing need**

Having discussed your current circumstances with you, the table below sets out the actions that need to be taken to resolve your immediate housing issue (including remaining within your current accommodation if appropriate) and other related needs:

Action to be taken	Date of action	By whom	Other Agency actions
<i>IE Referral to Private Rented Scheme (include specific details)</i>	<i>Immediate referral. Follow up on 12/12/12</i>	<i>Housing Options</i>	
<i>Attend appointment with supported accommodation provider.</i>	<i>12/12/12</i>	<i>Insert name of homeless person</i>	

You have given us consent to contact other agencies on your behalf.

You have follow up appointments with:

{Insert details of time, location, agency name, individual name and contact details}

**4. Preventing rough sleeping**

The actions outlined above will address your housing need both in the short and medium term. The advice and assistance given, if followed, should ensure that your homelessness is prevented or resolved and that you do not therefore have to sleep rough.



Following our discussion today and the actions taken you will be staying in the following location tonight:

**5. Longer term housing needs**

In order to address your longer term housing needs and to prevent future homelessness we have agreed that the following steps need to be taken:

Action to be taken	Date of action	By whom	Other Agency actions

**6. On-going support and an update review of the advice and assistance you have received**

Should you wish to discuss your case further with regard to changes in your circumstances or if any of the above is unclear is, your named contact is:  
*{insert name and appropriate contact details}*

The complaints procedure if you are not happy with the advice you have received today is:

*{insert details}*

A copy of this letter will be kept by the local authority in case you lose this copy or you have cause to come back, so we may consider the steps that have been taken and any further action that is necessary to prevent you being homeless.

Yours sincerely,



## Appendix 5

### **S.192 Duty to persons not in priority need who are not homeless intentionally.**

(1) This section applies where the local housing authority—

(a) are satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible for assistance, and (b) are not satisfied that he became homeless intentionally, but are not satisfied that he has a priority need.

(2) The authority shall provide the applicant with (or secure that he is provided with) advice and assistance] in any attempts he may make to secure that accommodation becomes available for his occupation.

(3) The authority may secure that accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant.]

(4) The applicant's housing needs shall be assessed before advice and assistance is provided under subsection (2).

(5) The advice and assistance provided under subsection (2) must include information about the likely availability in the authority's district of types of accommodation appropriate to the applicant's housing needs (including, in particular, the location and sources of such types of accommodation).]

# Agenda Item 6



**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Housing

16 October 2013

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## Use of Council Housing as Temporary Accommodation

### Purpose

1. This Policy sets out when council homes can be used as temporary accommodation and clarifies the terms for when a Licence Agreement or a Non Secure Temporary Tenancy Agreement is granted.
2. This is a key decision because it is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority and it was first published in the October 2013 Forward Plan.

### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder approves the Policy on the use of Council housing as temporary accommodation at Appendix 1, and more specifically:
  - a) The use of Licence Agreements pursuant to the Housing Act 1996 S188 (pending a homeless decision) and S190(2) (intentionally homeless).
  - b) The use of a Non Secure Temporary Tenancy pursuant to S193 of the Housing Act 1996 where the Council has a duty to house until such time that suitable alternative accommodation can be found.
  - c) The use of a Non Secure Temporary Tenancy where a former tenant has died or moved away and the remaining household has been given discretionary agreement to stay temporarily until more suitable accommodation can be found.
4. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Housing to amend the Tenancy Policy to specify the inclusion for the use of Licences and Non Secure Temporary Tenancies, as defined in the Policy at Appendix 1.

### Reasons for Recommendations

5. This Policy will enable the Council to ensure it is making best use of Council stock, ensuring households are treated equally and fairly, and that we have a readily available supply of temporary accommodation without the need to resort to bed & breakfast accommodation.

### Background

6. Since 2010/11 South Cambridgeshire has seen an increase in homeless acceptances year on year.

7. The Homelessness Strategy identifies an urgent need for more temporary accommodation to help meet the increased demand and reduce the need to use bed & breakfast accommodation which is both costly and unsuitable.
8. There is a corporate commitment to increase the supply of temporary accommodation, prioritising council-owned properties whilst not restricting options in other sectors.
9. Under the empty homes project 9 properties have been bought back into use as temporary accommodation for homeless households and a further 40 existing council properties are also being used for this purpose.
10. As well as the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households, the Council's Tenancy Policy sets out the position on succession and allows discretionary powers to grant a new tenancy to family members to ensure there are safeguards in place to protect the vulnerable. Where this discretion is applied but the existing accommodation does not match their needs, the remaining household will be granted the property on a temporary basis until more suitable alternative accommodation can be found.

### **Considerations**

11. Currently all households living in temporary accommodation are issued with a temporary tenancy agreement. However, recent case law has set a precedent that accommodation can be offered under licence pursuant to the Housing Act 1996 S188 (pending a homeless decision) and S190(2) (intentionally homeless).
12. By granting a Licence Agreement in these circumstances, households are treated equally and fairly, having the same rights as households placed in bed & breakfast or hostel accommodation. This means that it is not necessary to apply to the courts for a possession order if the applicant refuses to leave when the Council no longer has a duty to house them.
13. In taking this approach, the accommodation is made available only for as long as is required, without the need for lengthy delays whilst possession is obtained through the court.
14. It is also considered timely, due to the recent case law and changes to succession, that the temporary tenancy agreement is reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose.

### **Options**

15. An alternative to the use of a Licence Agreement would be the option to grant only a Non Secure Temporary Tenancy Agreement. This would give the applicant greater rights than those placed in bed & breakfast or hostel accommodation and would mean that regardless of their circumstances, court proceedings would need to be instigated for possession where the applicant refused to move out. This option is not considered preferable as it reduces the available supply of temporary accommodation and goes against the principles of interim accommodation, that the occupier should be entitled to four weeks' notice and then to the benefit of the further inevitable delay while possession is obtained through the courts.

## **Implications**

16. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

### ***Financial***

17. Financial savings may be achieved through reduced court costs.

### ***Legal***

18. The recent case law sets a precedent for the use of Licence Agreements pursuant to S188 and 190(2) of the Housing Act 1996.

### ***Risk Management***

19. It is proposed to review the Policy in 6 months time.

### ***Equality and Diversity***

20. This Policy ensures that there is equality and fairness to homeless households placed in temporary council accommodation.

## **Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)**

21. This Policy has been developed in consultation with Legal taking into account recent case law.

## **Effect on Strategic Aims**

### **Aim 6 – Increase the supply of temporary accommodation, prioritising council-owned properties whilst not restricting options in other sectors**

22. This Policy will support the readily available supply of temporary accommodation and ensure that there is a clear and transparent policy on how we use council housing as temporary accommodation.

## **Background Papers**

[R\(CN\) v Lewisham LBC and R\(ZH\) v Newham LBC case law](#)

**Report Author:** Julie Fletcher – Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader  
Telephone: (01954) 713352

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# Appendix A

## Policy on the use of Council housing as temporary accommodation

**Version 1**

**Dated: October 2013**

**Related documents:** Homelessness Strategy  
SCDC Tenancy Policy



## Contents

<b>Section 1</b>	.....
<b>Section 2</b>	.....
<b>Section 3</b>	.....
<b>Section 4</b>	.....
4.2	.....
4.7	.....





## Section 1: Purpose

- 1.1 Since 2010/11 South Cambridgeshire District has seen an increase in homeless acceptances year on year. This can be attributed to the economic downturn, changes to the Local Housing Allowance and the impact of recent welfare reforms and follows a similar trend to the national homelessness picture.
- 1.2 The Homelessness Strategy published October 2013 identifies an urgent need for more temporary accommodation to help meet the increased demand and reduce the need to use bed & breakfast accommodation which is both costly and unsuitable.
- 1.3 The Council has therefore increased the use of its own stock as temporary accommodation and has implemented a programme to purchase empty properties in the private sector to bring back into use as temporary accommodation. This is in accordance with the Council's Corporate Aim "A.6 – *Increase the supply of temporary accommodation, prioritising council-owned properties whilst not restricting options in other sectors*"
- 1.4 The Council's Tenancy Policy also sets out the position on succession and allows discretionary powers to grant a new tenancy to family members to ensure there are safeguards in place to protect the vulnerable. Where this discretion is applied but the existing accommodation does not match their needs, the remaining household may stay on a temporary basis until more suitable alternative accommodation can be found.
- 1.5 The purpose of this policy is set out when a Licence Agreement or a Non Secure Temporary Tenancy Agreement will be granted for use within the Council's stock.



## **Section 2: Reasons for using temporary accommodation in the Council's stock**

2. Council-owned properties will be used as temporary accommodation in the following circumstances:
  - a) Temporary accommodation is to be provided in accordance with Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 pending a decision on a homeless application, which may also include where a review of the decision is requested.
  - b) Temporary accommodation is provided in accordance with Section 190(2) of the Housing Act 1996 where the local authority are satisfied that an applicant is homeless and is eligible for assistance but have become homeless intentionally.
  - c) Temporary accommodation is provided in accordance with Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 following a homelessness decision where the local authority has a duty to persons with priority need who are not homeless intentionally.
  - d) Temporary accommodation is provided on an interim basis where the former tenant has died or moved away from Council accommodation. The remaining household has been granted a new tenancy under discretionary powers but is expected to move to alternative suitable accommodation when available that better meets their needs.

## **Section 3: Types of Agreements to be used when allocating temporary accommodation in the Council's stock**

### **3.1 Licence Agreement**

- 3.1.1 A Licence Agreement will be granted in circumstances a) and b) above where a homeless decision is pending or where an applicant is found to be homeless intentionally.
- 3.1.2 This is in accordance with current case law [R(CN) v Lewisham LBC and R(ZH) v Newham LBC handed down on 11 July 2013] which sets a precedent that accommodation can be offered under licence pursuant to s188 and 190(2) of the Housing Act 1996.



- 3.1.3 By granting a licence, households are treated equally and fairly, having the same rights as households placed in bed & breakfast or hostel accommodation.
- 3.14 In terminating a Licence Agreement, the household will be notified in writing of the date they are expected to leave the premises, giving a reasonable amount of time for them to secure alternative accommodation. This will usually be 28 days, but individual circumstances will be taken into account. Possession proceedings in the County Court will not need to be brought and where the property is not vacated by the specified date a certified bailiff will be appointed to assist with eviction.
- 3.15 This approach has been taken to ensure that we have a readily available supply of temporary accommodation without the need to resort to bed & breakfast accommodation. By granting a licence interim temporary accommodation is available only for as long as is required, without the need for lengthy delays while possession is obtained through the Court.

### 3.2 **Non Secure Temporary Tenancy Agreement**

- 3.2.1 A Non Secure Temporary Tenancy Agreement will be granted in circumstances c) and d) above.
- 3.2.2 Subject to the Tenancy Conditions being adhered to, the temporary accommodation will remain available until such time that alternative suitable accommodation is secured.
- 3.2.3 Where a reasonable offer of suitable alternative accommodation is refused, a Notice to Quit will be served giving four weeks' notice in writing. Where the property is not vacated by the date stated on the Notice to Quit, court proceedings will be instigated.

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# Agenda Item 7



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Housing

16 October 2013

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## Affordable Homes Draft Service Plan 2014/15

### Purpose

1. To provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with an update on the revised actions for the Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2014/15.
2. This is not a key decision but has been brought before the Housing Portfolio Holder because it sets out the proposed key actions for the Affordable Homes Service for the forthcoming year and it was first published in the March 2013 Forward Plan.

### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio endorses the service plan actions identified in this report and suggests additions to or amendments to these service plan actions if required.

### Reasons for Recommendations

4. The draft service plan actions set out in Table 1 below have been developed with housing officers taking into account the key aims and objectives of the Council, central government direction and the forthcoming priorities for the Affordable Homes Service. These actions will be incorporated within the final form of the Affordable Homes service plan to be brought back to the Housing Portfolio Holder in March 2014.

### Background

5. The existing Affordable Homes Service Plan covers the period 2013/14 - 2014/15 and includes a number of service plan projects intended to run over a 2 or 3 year timeframe. This is therefore a refresh of the service plan designed mainly to introduce new service plan actions to address external challenges.
6. The Affordable Homes service plan differs to other service plans within the Council as it is closely linked to the HRA Business Plan. The introduction of the self financing regime for council housing from April 2012 means that a separate 30 year HRA Business Plan is in place from 2012/13 onwards.
7. There is also a linked Asset Management Strategy that sets out the Council's approach to managing its homes and other properties, which also covers a 30 year period. Arising from the Asset Management Strategy, the Five Year Housing Maintenance Plan sets out the planned expenditure to maintain the Council's homes and forms part of the HRA Business Plan.
8. The service plan is set in the context of the overarching Housing Strategy 2012 - 2016, which in turn is related to the sub regional housing strategy, which reflects the

sub regional strategic housing agenda of the sub regional housing market centred on Cambridge.

### Considerations

9. The service plan takes account of a number of significant changes arising from the national policy changes. These include a new housing regulatory regime from April 2012, changes to Housing Benefit and welfare benefits and changes to allocations and lettings following the Localism Act 2011.
10. In addition the service plan addresses the key actions of the Council which include the commencement of a new build strategy.

### Options

11. The Portfolio Holder is requested to consider these proposed actions and to suggest changes or additions where required. Service plan actions carried forward from last year are not listed in the table and include:
  - Development of neighbourhood teams and hub offices
  - Development of options to best meet the refurbishment needs of the Council's stock including
    - A review of Wilford Furlong and
    - the Robinson Court (Gamlingay) redevelopment
  - Continuing to extend and broaden the pool of temporary accommodation including overseeing the completion of the hostel at Robson Court (Waterbeach)
  - Establishing a pilot scheme to set up the new Housing Company

**Table 1 New Service Plan themes 2014 -2015**

	Action	Expected completion	Notes
8	Digital inclusion	March 2016	Project to explore the potential take up of internet based services and to identify the barriers to tenants accessing services using internet technology.
9	Financial inclusion	March 2016	Project to explore the potential use of Credit Unions and other measures to assist those tenants that may not have access to bank accounts. Linked to welfare reform mitigation work.
10	Review of policy changes to adapt to welfare benefit changes, including impact of Universal Credit etc.	March 2015	Some changes may be required within 2014 –review will consider where we have got to & check that everything is working as it should and identify any changes needed.

11	Strategy review of homes of non traditional construction	2016	To pull together a coherent and timed strategy to deliver those elements needed to address the non traditional properties as well as those properties identified for demolition in the HRA business plan.
12	Tenancy fraud	July 2015	Funded CLG project starting in July 2013.
13	Explore Homelessness Gold Standard	Mar 2015	External accreditation of Council's homelessness service. Dependent upon outcome of peer review taking place in 2013.
14	Delivery of new Older persons housing related support service	Jan 2015	Work needed to roll out new housing related support contract for older people. Dependent upon outcome of procurement process being carried out by County Council in 2013/14.
15	Handyman service	March 2015	Activation of service to offer small jobs to elderly and disabled households. Already part of Mears contract but needs to be implemented.
16	Review of Mears contract	March 2015	Mid term review. If the outcome is that a fresh procurement exercise is needed a decision will need to be taken in early 2015 to allow enough time to complete the work required.
17	Explore Housing Foyer	March 2015	Work with the County Council and a housing association HA partner to develop a feasibility report.
18	Review of disabled adaptations in HRA stock	March 2015	Project to review work completed, policy matters, identified need, contractors performance, HIA links, OT performance etc
19	Estate inspection project	March 2015	Project to review the need for a welfare garden scheme, any patterns in ASB and links to grounds maintenance.

### **Implications**

12. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

#### ***Financial***

13. There are financial dimensions to all of these projects but there is no significant new funding required. The proposed changes to welfare benefits have potentially

significant implications for the income stream for both the HRA (rents) and the Council (Council Tax).

***Legal***

14. A number of these projects will require specialist input from our legal services.

***Staffing***

15. There are no specific staffing requirements arising from these projects at this stage.

***Risk Management***

16. A number of risk logs will be developed for each project and incorporated into the overall Affordable Homes risk register.

***Equality and Diversity***

17. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on each policy change as it is developed.

**Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)**

18. The draft service plan actions have been produced with the help of the Tenant Participation Group and housing officers. We will consult with the youth council as part of the consultation process for the final service plan which is to be approved in March 2014.

**Effect on Strategic Aims**

19. The Affordable Homes service plan is important to help deliver all three of the Council's main strategic aims.

**Background Papers**

No background papers have been used for this report.

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## Housing Portfolio Holder – Work Plan

Date of meeting	Title of Report	Key or Non-Key?	Reason Key Specify no(s) listed below	Purpose of Report, ie For Recommendation / Decision / Monitoring	Lead Officer / Report Author
19 March 2014	Temporary Accommodation review (to include joint working with County update)	Non-Key		Monitoring	Sue Carter / Heather Wood
	Update on new Build Strategy progress To include pipeline update etc.	Non-Key		Monitoring	Schuyler Newstead
	Wilford Furlong project	Non-Key		Decision	Schuyler Newstead
	Gypsy & Traveller accommodation needs progress report	Non-Key		Monitoring	Stephen Hills
	Barriers to employment /back to work project	Non-Key		Monitoring	Dawn Graham ?
18 June 2014 (TBC)	Robinson Court update	Non Key		Monitoring	Schuyler Newstead/Heather Wood
	Policy Changes Review	Non Key		Monitoring	Julie Fletcher
	Non Traditional Strategy	Non key		Decision	Anita Goddard
15 October 2014 (TBC)	Service Plan	Non Key		Decision	Stephen Hills
	Estate Redevelopment Update	Non Key		Decision	Schuyler Newstead
	Foyer Feasibility report	Key		Decision	Heather Wood

	Estate Inspection Project	Key		Decision	Geoff Clark
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### Key Decisions

1. it is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates, or
2. it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area of the District comprising two or more wards.  
In determining the meaning of 'significant' for the purposes of the above, the Council must have regard to any guidance for the time being issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the 2000 Act (guidance)).