

South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

t: 03450 450 500
f: 01954 713149
dx: DX 729500 Cambridge 15
minicom: 01480 376743
www.scambs.gov.uk



24 July 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 **THURSDAY, 1 AUGUST 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.

AGENDA		PAGES
PROCEDURAL ITEMS		
1.	Declarations of Interest	
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting The Portfolio Holder is asked to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2013 as a correct record.	1 - 4
RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL		
3.	Asset Management Policy (Key)	5 - 32
DECISION ITEMS		
4.	Under-occupancy Policy (Key)	33 - 46
5.	BASSINGBOURN: Disposal of garage site off Mill Lane	47 - 52
STANDING ITEMS		
6.	Tenant Participation Group	
7.	Work Programme 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	53 - 54

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 forward plan.

- 8. Date of next meeting**
16 October 2013 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

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR VISITORS TO SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HALL

While the District Council endeavours to ensure that visitors come to no harm when visiting South Cambridgeshire Hall, those visitors also have a responsibility to make sure that they do not risk their own or others' safety.

Security

Members of the public attending meetings in non-public areas of the Council offices must report to Reception, sign in, and at all times wear the Visitor badges issued. Before leaving the building, such visitors must sign out and return their Visitor badges to Reception.

Emergency and Evacuation

In the event of a fire, a continuous alarm will sound. Evacuate the building using the nearest escape route; from the Council Chamber or Mezzanine viewing gallery this would be via the staircase just outside the door. Go to the assembly point at the far side of the staff car park.

- **Do not** use the lifts to exit the building. If you are unable to negotiate stairs by yourself, the emergency staircase landings are provided with fire refuge areas, which afford protection for a minimum of 1.5 hours. Press the alarm button and wait for assistance from the Council fire wardens or the fire brigade.
- **Do not** re-enter the building until the officer in charge or the fire brigade confirms that it is safe to do so.

First Aid

If someone feels unwell or needs first aid, please alert a member of staff.

Access for People with Disabilities

The Council is committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to its agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you. All meeting rooms are accessible to wheelchair users. There are disabled toilet facilities on each floor of the building. Infra-red hearing assistance systems are available in the Council Chamber and viewing gallery. To use these, you must sit in sight of the infra-red transmitter and wear a 'neck loop', which can be used with a hearing aid switched to the 'T' position. If your hearing aid does not have the 'T' position facility then earphones are also available and can be used independently. You can obtain both neck loops and earphones from Reception.

Toilets

Public toilets are available on each floor of the building next to the lifts.

Recording of Business and Use of Mobile Phones

The Council is committed to openness and transparency. The Council and all its committees, sub-committees or any other sub-group of the Council or the Executive have the ability to formally suspend Standing Order 21.4 (prohibition of recording of business) upon request to enable the recording of business, including any audio / visual or photographic recording in any format.

Use of social media during meetings is permitted to bring Council issues to a wider audience. To minimise disturbance to others attending the meeting, all attendees and visitors are asked to make sure that their phones and other mobile devices are set on silent / vibrate mode during meetings.

Banners, Placards and similar items

No member of the public shall be allowed to bring into or display at any Council meeting any banner, placard, poster or other similar item. The Chairman may require any such item to be removed.

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

Since 1 July 2008, the Council has operated a Smoke Free Policy. Visitors are not allowed to smoke at any time within the Council offices, or in the car park or other grounds forming part of those offices.

Food and Drink

Vending machines and a water dispenser are available on the ground floor near the lifts at the front of the building. Visitors are not allowed to bring food or drink into the meeting room.

This page is left blank intentionally.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Wednesday, 20 March 2013 at 5.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Mark Howell

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors: Bunty Waters

Opposition spokesmen: Mark Hersom

Also in attendance: Ben Shelton

Officers:

Jenny Clark	Lands Officer
Julie Fletcher	Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader
Emma George	Housing Policy Officer
Anita Goddard	Housing Operational Services Manager
Stephen Hills	Affordable Homes Director
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer
Heather Wood	Housing Advice and Options Manager

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

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

31. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Housing Portfolio Holder signed, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2013..

32. GT CHISHILL: TRANSFER OF TRACK TO WALLER'S CLOSE

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a further report in reviewing his previous decision in relation to the transfer of land at Waller's Close, Great Chishill (Minute 23 refers).

The issue had been brought back to the Portfolio Holder because of concerns expressed by Great and Little Chishill Parish Council. However, it was noted that nobody from the Parish Council was in attendance to expand on those concerns.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **reaffirmed but modified** his decision of 23 January 2013 (Minute 23 refers)

1. -to transfer the freehold of the track at the end of Waller's Close, Great Chishill at Nil cost to the owner of the rabbit sanctuary land at the rear, following repairs paid for by South Cambridgeshire District Council to the track surface, the transfer to include a covenant restricting the use of the track to serve the rabbit sanctuary land only either in its existing use or for agricultural use only; and
2. that, should the track be used in future for commercial or housing development on

private land rather than solely for charitable purposes or for agricultural use, the owner must apply to South Cambridgeshire District Council for release of the restrictive covenant. If this is agreed, it will be subject to the owner paying to the Council any increase in the value of the access from Waller's Close.

33. BASSINGBOURN: DISPOSAL OF GARAGE SITES OFF MILL LANE

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking his agreement for the disposal of the District Council's garage site off Mill Lane, Bassingbourn as outlined red on the plan.

Councillor Nigel Cathcart, a local Member for Bassingbourn, said that the former public house adjacent to the garage site had been a popular village facility in the past, and expressed the community's aspiration that, one day, it might re-open. He urged the Portfolio Holder therefore to retain the garage site with that aspiration in mind, at least for six months to establish whether re-opening the public house and using the garage site as an ancillary parking area was economically viable. The Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee said that, realistically, 12 – 18 months might be needed to determine the former pub's future and that there would also be a benefit for the community in selling the garage site for £100,000.

Councillor Bunty Waters was eager to see some evidence of intent.

The Portfolio Holder observed that retaining the garage site would impose a financial liability on South Cambridgeshire District Council. However, he was prepared to allow six months to see whether re-opening the pub was practical and, if not, then to re-consider the issue following a re-valuation of the land.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **deferred** making a decision for six months 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. Tenancies of the garages on site would be ended within the next six months and, after that time, the Housing Portfolio Holder would decide whether to authorise a community use or exercise his power to sell following a reassessment of the land value.

34. CUSTOMER COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking his approval for a '*Handling of Customer Compliments, Comments and Complaints*' Policy, specifically for Affordable Homes, in order to be compliant with the Localism Act 2011 and include the Housing Ombudsman and designated persons / tenant panel.

Those present sought and received clarification about the terminology and functionality of the new scheme and were told that, in practical terms, there would be no significant change from the current process. However, there would probably be a compulsory membership fee for using the Housing Ombudsman from 2014/15, estimated at £9,000.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **approved** the Handling of Customer compliments, comments and complaints" Policy as set out in Appendix A

35. HOUSING SERVICE PLAN

The Housing Portfolio Holder received and noted the Affordable Homes Service Plan 2013/14 – 2015/16.

With regard to establishing “a Council ‘back to work’ project and...apprenticeships across the district to equip...young people for productive life”, the Portfolio Holder stated his expectation that Apprenticeships should be “proper jobs”.

36. HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY - 12 MONTH REVIEW

The Housing Portfolio Holder **received and noted** a report updating him about progress of the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) 12 months after the establishment of the shared service.

The Portfolio Holder noted the steady improvement in performance but reiterated that savings should be ploughed back into the service. His main concern continued to be delays caused by the lack of Occupational Therapists.

37. TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP

Wendy Head, (TPG Chair) and Luisa Sartini-Baldwin (TPG member and Linchpin project worker) addressed the Housing Portfolio Holder and those present at the meeting.

38. FORWARD PLAN

The Housing Portfolio Holder noted the Forward Plan.

39. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Housing Portfolio Holder meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 19 June 2013 starting at 5.30pm.

The Meeting ended at 7.00 p.m.

This page is left blank intentionally.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder

1 August 2013

AUTHOR/S: Director of Housing

**HRA ASSET SUSTAINABILITY POLICY
(DISPOSAL AND ACQUISITIONS)****Purpose**

1. To seek the approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder for the adoption of a new HRA (Housing Revenue Account) Asset Sustainability Policy.
2. This is a key decision as it may result in the authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings/income, which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates, and it was first published in the February 2011 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

3. That the Housing Portfolio Holder recommends to Full Council the adoption of the new HRA Asset Sustainability Policy (Disposals and Acquisitions) attached as Appendix A.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The new policy is necessary to ensure that the Council is able to operate an efficient asset management approach with regard to the Housing Revenue Account and in particular support the development of new homes in a commercial environment.
5. The Policy will need Full Council approval as it forms part of the Council's 'policy framework'.

Background

6. The Asset Management Strategy was adopted by the Housing Portfolio Holder in February 2011 and the New Build (HRA) Strategy by the Cabinet in November 2012. These strategies require the Affordable Homes team to act in a more commercial way.
7. The Action Plan of this Asset Management Strategy identified the need for an Asset Sustainability Policy (previously known as an Asset Utilisation Policy) to ensure clarity on the decision making process for how Housing Revenue Account properties are either acquired or disposed of by the Council.
8. Existing protocols for these processes were adopted at a time when the HRA portfolio was not subject to the same commercial demands that now apply since the self financing reforms which came into effect on 1/4/12. The existing Housing Consultation Protocol required lengthy consultation with parish councils which did not always permit timely business decisions to be made. Parish Councils will still be kept informed and consulted upon through the planning process where new development proposals are submitted.

Considerations

- 9. The decision to dispose of a Council owned asset is not driven purely by financial considerations. The proposed policy acknowledges the need to consider social impacts alongside the financial data.
- 10. Acquiring and building new homes are activities carried out in a commercial environment where decisions need to be taken quickly and with commercial confidentiality.
- 11. Appendix B sets out a summary table showing the key changes proposed and the current policy position for comparison. This same table appears within the Policy (Appendix A) but without the comparative column.

Options

- 12. The Housing Portfolio Holder may wish to approve this policy for recommendation to Full Council as it appears in Appendix A.
- 13. The Housing Portfolio holder may wish to approve the policy for recommendation to Full Council with identified changes to be included.
- 14. The Housing Portfolio Holder may wish to reject the policy and retain the current arrangements. Appendix B sets out a comparison of the proposed new policy with the existing policy arrangements.

Implications

15.	Financial	<p>This policy relates to individual property transactions that will sometimes total many hundreds of thousands of pounds. Expenditure will always be within the planned expenditure for the capital programme and will be subject to a number of corporate controls and a robust business plan that demonstrates value for money in terms of financial, social and economic benefits. The income derived from sales and the subsequent savings to the HRA repairs budget will all be recycled in the HRA accounts to support service delivery and the building of new homes.</p> <p>There is no extra expenditure required by this policy.</p>
	Legal	<p>This policy forms part of the Council's policy framework within the Housing Investment Programme and will therefore need Full Council approval.</p>

Staffing	There are no staffing implications arising from this proposal.
Risk Management	The activities covered by the policy are already undertaken on a largely ad hoc basis. The adoption of this policy would provide a more measured protocol for disposing of and acquiring properties which should allow risks to be better controlled.
Equality and Diversity	n/a
Equality Impact Assessment completed	n/a
Climate Change	The disposal of poorly performing homes and their subsequent replacement with new energy efficient homes will overall have a beneficial impact upon climate change factors.

Consultations

16. Discussions have been held with the Legal & Democratic Services Manager, Executive Director and the Head of Finance, Policy & Performance.

Consultation with Children and Young People

17. None

Effect on Strategic Aims

18. We will make sure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer outstanding and sustainable quality of life for our residents. This policy is intended to ensure that the Council owned homes are of the highest quality and that the process for acquiring new homes is efficient and business-like.

Conclusions / Summary

19. The Council's HRA housing stock is a multi million pound portfolio. It is important that the processes for managing this asset including the decision making processes for disposal and acquisitions are efficient and suitable for a commercial environment.
20. The Housing Portfolio Holder is asked to endorse the attached policy for approval by Full Council which seeks to achieve these aims.

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

Asset Management Strategy
New Build Strategy

Contact Officers:

Schuyler Newstead Head of Housing Strategy and Development 01954 71 3332
Julie Fletcher – Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader 01954 713352

This page is left blank intentionally.

DRAFT



HRA Asset Sustainability Policy (Disposals and Acquisitions)

[Supplementary document to the Asset Management Strategy]

Dated: August 2013

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The HRA Asset Sustainability Policy has been developed to complement the HRA Asset Management Strategy and the overriding HRA Business Plan to ensure we are making best use of our existing stock and providing value for money to our tenants. In a changing political and economic climate the Council needs to invest in its assets now and plan for the future to be able to meet the needs of residents. This policy will help the Council in meeting its vision for the housing service:

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.

- 1.2 The changes to the HRA self-financing regime implemented in April 2012 has fundamentally transformed the way in which the housing function operates by freeing up local authorities to plan investment for the long term based on their income rental stream. This places a strong reliance on being able to accurately forward plan the maintenance of our existing stock as well as looking at options for increasing the supply of affordable housing that residents need within the resources available to us. This requires more detailed consideration of a number of options including asset management, service delivery standards and demographic changes, as well as debt profiling. The Council will therefore need to operate in a much more commercially sensitive environment than has previously been the case, with the need for greater scrutiny of both income and expenditure and a robust decision making process that enables the Council to operate effectively within the new framework.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this Policy is to:
- Set out the operational protocol for the decision-making process relating to the disposal and acquisition of land/property to enable the Council to operate within its business framework.
 - Identify opportunities for the purchase of properties/land to increase the supply of affordable housing.
 - Set out the criteria and considerations for disposing of HRA assets that are no longer considered to be fit for purpose and not able to be re-modelled, representing poor value for money in financial terms and/or negative social benefits to our tenants and the wider public.

3. Links to other Strategies and Policies

- 3.1 The HRA Business Plan includes options over a 30 year period for investment into its housing stock to ensure it can meet the Decent Homes Standard as a minimum, as well as addressing some tenant led priorities such as disabled adaptations and fuel poverty measures. This Policy therefore forms a key part of that plan to support its delivery and help to maintain the viability of the housing stock, as well as linking to other strategies/policies as identified below:

- HRA 30-Year Business Plan
- HRA 5-year maintenance Plan
- Asset Management Strategy
- Garage Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Warm Homes Strategy
- Empty Homes Strategy
- New Build Strategy
- Resident Involvement Strategy
- Under-occupation Policy

4. Disposals

4.1 Legal Context

Local authorities have the freedom to dispose of their land in any manner that they wish subject to certain provisos prescribed within the following major Acts, other Acts and General Consents:

4.1.1 S123 of the Local Government Act 1972

Under this Act, the Council has wide powers for the disposal of its property assets. The overriding requirement is to obtain the best consideration that can be reasonably obtained. Where the Council wishes to dispose of land below market value specific consent from the Secretary of State may be required where the difference between the market value and the 'sale' price is £2M or less unless there is deemed consent under one of the general disposal consents.

4.1.2 The General Disposal Consent 2003 (Circular 06/03)

The terms of the 2003 Consent mean that specific consent is not required for the disposal of any interest in land which the authority considers will help it to secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. There are caveats. For example -

- we should have regard to our community strategy
- disposal at less than best consideration is subject to the condition that the undervalue does not exceed £2,000,000 (two million pounds).
- we must be satisfied that the land is held under powers which permit it to be disposed of under the terms of the 1972 Act.
- consent does not apply to disposals of land held under section 233 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (land held for planning purposes).
- nor does this general consent apply to land held for housing purposes under the Housing Act 1995.
- we must also carry out any further procedures which may be necessary to enable us to dispose of the land before making a final decision and seeking consent, e.g advertising before selling former Public Open Space
- all disposals need to comply with the EC's state aid rules. A disposal at less than best consideration constitutes the provision of a subsidy to one or more of the parties depending on the nature of the development. The nature and

amount of the subsidy must comply with state aid rules, particularly if there is no element of competition in the disposal process. The benefit of unlawful aid is recoverable from the recipient.

- we are recommended on all disposals to obtain a realistic valuation so that we can determine whether the proposed price is the best consideration reasonably obtainable, whether the Consent applies or whether a specific consent is needed. This should be done irrespective of the method of disposal.

4.1.3 The General Housing Consents 2013 - Section 32 of the Housing Act 1985

Under S32 the local authority has the power to dispose of land and dwellings held for housing purposes. Secretary of State consent will be required unless the disposal is covered under this general consent and relates to the disposal of:

- Vacant dwellings except to a body owned or partly owned by the local authority (dwellings must remain as social housing where sold to a social provider);
- Occupied dwelling houses to secure tenants (and individuals assessed as needing help accessing home ownership);
- Dwellings to tenants who have the right to buy acquiring with non qualifying tenants;
- Dwellings on shared ownership terms;
- Housing authority land (including assets that are not dwellings (eg. garages); and
- Reversionary interest in houses and flats.

Disposals are to be at market value but discounts may be applicable to qualifying applicants.

4.1.4 Section 25 Local Government Act 1988

The General Consent under section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988 (Local Authority assistance for privately let housing) 2010 provides that a local authority may provide a registered provider with any financial assistance or gratuitous benefit of land for development as housing accommodation.

The aggregate value of financial assistance or gratuitous benefit provided by the disposal or grant shall not exceed £10 million.

4.2 Strategic Overview

4.2.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council owns and manages 5663 dwellings, including sheltered housing with communal facilities, flats with leaseholders and equity share properties. The majority of stock is of generally sound structure and well maintained, but there are individual properties that require greater investment, such as those of non-traditional construction or are of solid wall construction, that may not be financially sustainable in the long term and are often of a low standard either by design, type, energy efficiency or location. In these instances it may be financially prudent to dispose of the property and the capital reinvested for the provision of affordable housing.

4.2.2 There may also be opportunities for wider redevelopment for groups of properties that would provide better quality housing and additional homes. The following schemes have already been identified as potential redevelopment/regeneration and will be taken forward as part of the Council's Newbuild Strategy, with the exception of

Fairview, Longstanton where agreement has been given to transfer the property to a registered provider for the provision of affordable housing.

- Chalklands, Linton
- Robinson Court, Gamlingay
- Wilford Furlong, Willingham
- Fairview, Longstanton

4.2.3 In addition to houses, there are also garages and areas of land that have the potential for development or where the Council could maximise its income through sale on the open market.

4.3 Types of Disposals

The four types of disposal to be considered within the policy are:

- 1) Individual properties of poor design that require high levels of investment compared to the overall stock or where properties are identified as low demand or where serious management issues are being experienced.
- 2) Estates or groups of properties that are of a low standard that may provide wider redevelopment opportunities for additional affordable homes and/or better quality homes that enhances the surrounding environment.
- 3) Garage sites identified as high voids/low demand.
- 4) Land disposals:
 - a) small areas of land with no potential for development, i.e. garden land
 - b) land where there is development potential or ransom strips that would unlock a development site.

4.4 Criteria for Properties [1) and 2) above]

4.4.1 The Council's asset management system, Keystone, holds the stock information and will be able to indicate when a property or blocks of property types are failing. These will be coded red or amber within the system.

The Keystone Sustainability Modelling is carried out on all properties within the Council's housing stock. Considerations within the modelling include:

Financial Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of catch-up repairs • Cost of planned maintenance • Cyclical maintenance costs • Design and remodelling costs • Thermal efficiency • Response repair cost • Void cost • Void loss • Rental income • Service charge income (if applicable)
Economic

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt charge on the property • Construction type and prognosis over time • Development potential • Income from solar PVs (if applicable) • Income from RHI (if applicable)
<p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for the property and overall housing needs • Turnover of the property • Rural location • Housing Management issues • Environmental Impact

The modelling provides a score for each component, based on a value judgement made at the time that the modelling is carried out. For example, properties with low planned maintenance costs will score high, while those with high forecast costs will score lower. The assumptions made are that the debt on each property is the same and that key components will have the same life span. The parameters set within the modelling will be based on the technical considerations as well as taking into account the economic and social aspects of the property. The parameters to be approved by the Head of Housing and Property Services, in conjunction with input from the Accountancy Team within the Finance, Policy & Performance Service. The modelling will be carried out annually to help prioritise and target those properties identified red and amber.

4.4.2 Options

Where the Keystone Sustainability Modelling identifies that it is not sustainable to retain the property in its current form, the following alternative options should be considered:

- Refurbishment
- Change of use
- Redevelopment by the Council
- Sale at below market value to another social housing provider
- Sale at below market value to a local organisation, such as a parish council, for the wider benefit of the community
- Sale on the open market
- Shared Ownership and Equity/Homesteading type schemes

It will be necessary to obtain an independent valuation to enable a full assessment if the option to dispose through sale or redevelopment is considered. An independent valuer must be appointed in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures. Pocock & Shaw currently act as the Council's independent valuer following a procurement exercise in 2012. The contract is awarded up to 2015 with the option to extend for a further 3 years.

A full financial appraisal will be undertaken by the Development/Housing Accountant as part of the consideration of the options available, using an approved template. A decision as to the best option to be taken forward, taking into account the housing, community and financial aspects, will be agreed by the Director of Housing, in conjunction with the Accountancy Team.

4.4.3 Refurbishment

Overriding considerations such as location, demand, type etc. may make it more attractive to refurbish some properties even though they score low on the technical considerations. Where it is unlikely that the cost of refurbishment can be recovered

through its rental stream over a 30-year period, generally refurbishment would not be considered an option unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Decision Process: Head of Housing and Property Services

Consultation: None required

4.4.4 Change of Use

There may be occasions where the property can be better utilised through change of use, such as community use for tenants, district-based offices, etc. Properties will be considered on an individual basis where there is an identified need for alternative provision.

Decision Process: The Director of Housing has authority to approve change of use subject to Housing Portfolio Holder approval and any planning requirements.

Consultation: Development Control, Planning & New Communities and the Local Member(s). The parish council will be notified following the decision. Where planning permission is required, consultation will follow the normal planning process for consultation.

4.4.5 Redevelopment by the Council

Generally this option will be considered where there are opportunities for making better use of land available to provide additional affordable homes and/or better quality homes that enhance the surrounding environment.

Where the Council has the capacity and resources, redevelopment will be undertaken through the Council's Newbuild Strategy and overseen by the Head of Housing Strategy and Development. Redevelopment will be subject to planning permission and initial discussions with Development Control, Planning & New Communities will be held at an early stage.

Decision Process: The Director of Housing has authority to approve making land/property available for redevelopment by the Council subject to Housing Portfolio Holder approval.

Consultation: Development Control, Planning & New Communities and the Local Member(s). Following approval to make the land available, each scheme identified will be individually project managed by the Council's HRA Design Team. Full consultation with affected residents, the parish council and Local Members will be undertaken during the project.

4.4.6 Sale at below market value

Generally, the Council will seek to dispose of property at the best price reasonably obtainable in order to generate investment to support the delivery of the HRA Business Plan. However there are exceptions to this where the Council will consider gifting the land/property to a social housing provider or other organisation at a discounted rate as follows:

- Where development of land/redevelopment of existing stock will provide additional affordable good quality housing.
- Where land forms part of a wider regeneration scheme and includes an element of affordable housing for sale and complements the regeneration activity.
- Where there is a corporate or service desire to sell at an undervalue to support a particular project or partner organisation.

Consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis as to whether the property/land sold will be freehold or long-term lease and may be subject to uplifts or restrictive covenants. The discounted rate for the sale of the land/property will be agreed taking into account the overall valuation, weighted against the provision of affordable housing and the financial viability of the scheme.

Decision Process: The Director of Housing has authority to approve making land/property available at less than market value for affordable housing schemes, subject to:

- The approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder.
- An annual limit of £1 million for land/property made available at below market value, without reference to Cabinet; and
- Compliance with current planning policies and the available General Consent for disposal of land to Registered Social landlords under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Consultation: Local Member(s). The Parish Council will be informed following the decision to transfer the land at less than its value. Wider consultation on proposals for the site will be the responsibility of the social housing provider or other organisation.

4.4.7 Sale on the Open Market

This option will be primarily used where individual properties are identified as failing through the Keystone Sustainability Modelling and are void. The property will be marketed by the Council's contracted estate agent. Monies received will be redistributed within the HRA for the improvement and/or addition of affordable homes.

Decision Process: The Director of Housing has authority to approve individual properties for sale on the open market; subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder and not exceeding an annual limit of £2M without reference to the Cabinet.

Consultation: Local Member(s)

4.4.8 Shared Ownership and Equity/Homesteading type schemes

As with properties identified to be sold on the open market, where it is financially viable, consideration should be given to marketing the property on a shared ownership basis or equity/homesteading type scheme. This will ensure that the property remains affordable as well as receiving capital investment for the HRA Business Plan.

Decision Process: as above for - 'sale on the open market' (to count towards the annual limit of £2M)

Consultation: Local Member(s)

4.5 Criteria for Garages

- 4.5.1 The Council's Garage Strategy was approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder in 2011 and identifies garage sites that have the highest percentage of voids and are low demand. These sites are subject to a cost benefit analysis based on future income and expenditure over the long term, as well as taking into consideration community sustainability, ASB, vandalism and parking availability.

4.5.2 Options

Where it is identified not to retain a garage site in its current form, alternative options available include:

- Change of use
- Redevelopment by the Council
- Sale at below market value to another social housing provider
- Sale at below market value to a local organisation, such as a parish council, for the wider benefit of the community
- Sale on the open market as development land (sold without planning permission)

Decision Process: see 4.4 above.

Consultation: With local residents, local community groups, parish council and elected members prior to a decision being made on its future.

4.6 Criteria for Land Disposals

4.6.1 Small areas of land with no potential for development, i.e. garden land

Requests to purchase small areas of land that have no development potential will be looked at on an individual basis, with the aim of maximising income without losing any community benefit.

Generally requests will be looked at favourably unless there are circumstances where it would make good business sense to retain the land under the ownership of the Council.

Best price must be sought following an independent valuation.

Decision Process: The Director of Housing has authority to approve or refuse the disposal of housing land for public amenity use or for use as garden land or otherwise improve the access or amenity of a dwelling where the value does not exceed Level 2 (£25,000); subject to the confirmation from Planning & New Communities that the land is not capable of development which will significantly increase its value. [Where there is potential development by another party point 4.6.2 below applies].

Consultation: Development Control, Planning & New Communities and the Local Member(s).

4.6.2 Land where there is development potential or Ransom Strips that would unlock a development site

The principle for considering such requests will be to maximise income on land that would otherwise generate little or no income for the HRA. Consideration will need to be given to the loss of any community benefit, but this must be weighted against the financial benefit and the wider benefit of additional affordable housing (where applicable).

Planning considerations should not be taken into account at the initial stage of negotiation to dispose of land. An 'in principle' decision to dispose will be made on a commercial basis through negotiation between the developer, Director of Housing and the Housing Portfolio Holder. An independent valuation must be obtained and an indicative price to be agreed based on conditional options, such as a higher

contribution of affordable housing, which will be subject to the final planning decision. Issues with regards to the proposed development will be considered as part of the planning process.

Decision Process: The Director of Housing has authority to approve 'in principle' the sale of land ahead of any planning consent based on conditional options, such as a higher contribution of affordable housing. A non binding indicative value will be agreed at this stage but will be subject to the final scheme approved by planning, taking into account the provision of affordable housing, type and tenure.

Following planning approval, the Director of Housing has authority to approve the sale of land; subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder and not exceeding an annual limit of £1M without reference to the Cabinet.

Consultation: Local Member(s). Consultation of development will be through the planning process.

5. Acquisitions

5.1 Strategic Overview

- 5.1.1 Following the self-financing regime for the housing revenue account in April 2012, the Council is now in a position to invest not only in its existing stock but also in providing additional affordable housing.
- 5.1.2 South Cambridgeshire is in an area of high demand for all types of housing. Affordability is an acute issue for residents in the District, with average property prices above £300,000 and around a third of all households earning below the level needed to afford a market entry (lower quartile) private rent. There is also further pressure through the availability of private rented homes in the District of which there are virtually none that are within the Local Housing Allowance rates.
- 5.2.3 The demand for affordable housing far outstrips the supply. Projections within the Strategic Housing Market Assessment identifies a need for an additional 1474 affordable homes per annum for at least the next 5 years to help meet current housing need. Although figures on the housing register have drastically decreased since April 2013 following a review of the housing register, it is anticipated that the register will reach pre-2013 figures again of around 3,500.
- 5.2.4 There are further pressures on the housing service following changes to welfare reform, with the Council seeing an increase in homelessness applications and the need to use bed & breakfast as temporary accommodation. There are also increased demands on the Council's existing stock for smaller accommodation where households are affected by a reduction in housing benefit as they are considered to be under-occupying following benefit changes introduced in April 2012.

5.3 New Build Strategy

The Council has published its New Build Strategy that aims to provide 200 new affordable homes within the next 10 years. Its delivery programme identifies the following schemes to be taken forward over the next four years up to 2015.

- Chalklands, Linton – Council owned garage site providing 4 x 1 bed houses

- Gamlingay – redevelopment site owned by SCDC providing 11 good quality affordable homes
- Wilford Furlong, Willingham – large scale redevelopment/regeneration of existing site owned by SCDC
- Foxton – rural exception site providing 15 new affordable homes for local people
- Bourn – rural exception site providing 11 new affordable homes for local people
- Northstowe (phase 1) – S.106 development of strategic growth site with an affordable housing contribution

All developments of both new sites and redevelopment of existing council stock that are to remain within the Council's ownership will be assessed using a viability toolkit and in consultation with the appointed HRA Design Team to ensure the scheme is viable and sustainable in the future. All decisions will be evidenced by means of a robust business case that demonstrates value for money in terms of financial, social and economic benefits.

Decision Process: For the purchase of land not already owned by the Council, the Director of Housing has authority to approve purchase of land not exceeding £250,000. This will be in accordance with the Council's budget framework and approval by the Housing Portfolio Holder. For land purchase exceeding £250,000, agreement must be sought from the Executive Director, acting as the S.151 Officer and subject to the approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. All land purchases will be made on a conditional offer subject to planning approval.

Consultation: Local Member(s). Wider consultation of the proposed scheme will form an important aspect to the redevelopment of existing sites and also new developments within the New Build Strategy, which will involve the local community, local members and the parish council to help shape the future schemes.

5.4 Purchase of individual Empty Properties

One of the Council's objectives is to bring empty homes back into use. With the need to increase the supply of good quality temporary accommodation the Council will purchase empty properties that can be used as temporary accommodation, with the proviso that the property can be resold at a later date either on the open market or through equity share and the capital recycled to bring further empty properties back into use. Rents will be charged in accordance with target rents for social housing.

To purchase properties under this scheme, a business case will be submitted in accordance with the criteria set out for the scheme demonstrating value for money in terms of financial, social and economic benefits.

Decision Process: The Director of Housing has authority to approve the purchase of individual properties within the set budget, subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. All offers made are subject to contract.

Consultation: Local Member(s).

5.5 Purchase of 'off the shelf' Properties

Where there are opportunities for the Council to negotiate a deal with a private developer/agent to purchase homes, either on an individual basis or as a 'package deal', consideration will be given to the demand for such housing, taking into account their location, long term viability both in maintenance costs and rental income. Properties to be purchased within the HRA to provide additional affordable homes, with rents charged in accordance with target rents for social housing. Approval will

be subject to a robust business case that demonstrates value for money in terms of financial, social and economic benefits.

Decision Process: The Director of Housing has authority to approve the purchase of 'off the shelf' properties within the set budget, subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. For 'package deals' that exceed £1M, agreement must be sought from the Executive Director, acting as the S.151 Officer. All offers made are subject to contract.

Consultation: Local Member(s).

5.6 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.

Consultation: Local Member(s)

6. Summary

Decision Making/Consultation Process

Decisions taken by the Housing Portfolio Holder on the disposal/acquisition of property/land can be taken via decision notice and published through the Members Weekly Bulletin which is subject to call in procedures. The Housing Portfolio Holder may choose to take a decision through the formal Housing Portfolio Holder meeting where it is felt a decision is likely to require greater consultation and discussion.

DISPOSALS			
Ref	Options	Decision Making	Consultation
4.4.3	Refurbishment	Head of Housing and Property Services	None required
4.4.4	Change of Use	The Director of Housing has authority to approve change of use subject to Housing Portfolio Holder and any planning requirements.	Development Control, Planning & New Communities and the Local Member(s). The parish council will be notified following the decision. Where planning permission is required, consultation will follow the normal planning process for consultation.
4.4.5	Redevelopment by the Council	The Director of Housing has authority to approve making land/property available for redevelopment by the Council subject to Housing Portfolio Holder approval.	Development Control, Planning & New Communities and the Local Member(s). Following approval to make the land available, each scheme identified will be individually project managed by the Council's HRA Design Team. Full consultation with affected residents, the parish council and Local Members will be undertaken during the project.
4.4.6	Sale at below market value	The Director of Housing has authority to approve making land/property available at less than market value for affordable housing schemes, subject to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. ▪ An annual limit of £1 million for land/property made available at below market value, without reference to Cabinet; and ▪ Compliance with current planning policies and the available General Consent for disposal of land to Registered Social landlords under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988. 	Local Member(s). The parish council will be informed following the decision to transfer the land at less than its value. Wider consultation on proposals for the site will be the responsibility of the social housing provider or other organisation.

DISPOSALS			
Ref	Options	Decision Making	Consultation
4.4.7	Sale on the Open Market	The Director of Housing has authority to approve individual properties for sale on the open market; subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder and not exceeding an annual limit of £2M without reference to the Cabinet.	Local Member(s)
4.4.8	Shared Ownership and Equity/ Homesteading type schemes	See 4.4.7 above (to count towards the annual limit of £2M)	Local Member(s)
4.5	Garage Sites	See 4.4 above.	With local residents, local community groups, parish council and elected members prior to a decision being made on its future.
4.6.1	Small areas of land with no potential for development, i.e. garden land	The Director of Housing has authority to approve or refuse the disposal of housing land for public amenity use or for use as garden land or otherwise improve the access or amenity of a dwelling where the value does not exceed Level 2 £25,000; subject to the confirmation from Planning & New Communities that the land is not capable of development which will significantly increase its value. [Where there is potential development by another party – point 4.6.2 below applies].	Development Control, Planning & New Communities and the Local Member(s)
4.6.2	Land where there is development potential or Ransom Strips that would unlock a development site	The Director of Housing has authority to approve 'in principle' the sale of land ahead of any planning consent based on conditional options, such as a higher contribution of affordable housing. A non binding indicative value will be agreed at this stage but will be subject to the final scheme approved by planning, taking into account the provision of affordable housing, type and tenure. Following planning approval, the Director of Housing has authority to approve the sale of land; subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder and not exceeding an annual limit of £1M without reference to the Cabinet.	Local Member(s). Consultation of development will be through the planning process.

ACQUISITIONS			
		Decision Making	Consultation
5.3	New Build	For the purchase of land not already owned by the Council, the Director of Housing has authority to approve purchase of land not exceeding £250,000. This will be in accordance with the Council's budget framework and approval by the Housing Portfolio Holder. For land purchase exceeding £250,000, agreement must be sought from the Executive Director, acting as the S.151 Officer and subject to the approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. All land purchases will be made on a conditional offer subject to planning approval.	Local Member(s). Wider consultation of the proposed scheme will form an important aspect to the redevelopment of existing sites and also new developments within the New Build Strategy, which will involve the local community, local members and the parish council to help shape the future schemes.
5.4	Purchase of individual Empty Properties	The Director of Housing has authority to approve the purchase of individual properties within the set budget, subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. All offers made are subject to contract.	Local Member(s).
5.5	Purchase of 'off the shelf' Properties	The Director of Housing has authority to approve the purchase of 'off the shelf' properties within the set budget, subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. For 'package deals' that exceed £1M, agreement must be sought from the Executive Director, acting as the S.151 Officer. All offers made are subject to contract.	Local Member(s)
5.6	Sale to South Cambs Ltd	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.	Local Member(s)

This page is left blank intentionally.

Decision Making & Consultation Comparator

DISPOSALS		
Options	Decision Making	Consultation
Refurbishment		
Proposed	Head of Housing and Property Services	None
Current	Head of Housing and Property Services	None
Change of Use		
Proposed	The Director of Housing has authority to approve change of use subject to Housing Portfolio Holder approval and any planning requirements	Development Control, Planning & New Communities and the Local Member(s). The parish council will be notified following the decision. Where planning permission is required, consultation will follow the normal planning process for consultation.
Current	No formal procedure	Protocol for consultation on housing issues (April 2007). Applicable to Parish Councils and Local Members Options appraisal for an individual or a group of Council-owned properties within a parish – 42 days.
Redevelopment by the Council		
Proposed	The Director of Housing has authority to approve making land/property available for redevelopment by the Council subject to Housing Portfolio Holder approval.	Development Control, Planning & New Communities and the Local Member(s). Following approval to make the land available, each scheme identified will be individually project managed by the Council's HRA Design Team. Full consultation with affected residents, the parish council and Local Members will be undertaken during the project.
Current	Not applicable as no previous Council new build programme	

DISPOSALS		
Options	Decision Making	Consultation
Sale at below market value		
Proposed	<p>The Director of Housing has authority to approve making land/property available at less than market value for affordable housing schemes, subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. ▪ An annual limit of £1 million for land/property made available at below market value, without reference to Cabinet; and ▪ Compliance with current planning policies and the available General Consent for disposal of land to Registered Social landlords under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988. 	<p>Local Member(s). The parish council will be informed following the decision to transfer the land at less than its value. Wider consultation on proposals for the site will be the responsibility of the social housing provider or other organisation.</p>
Current	<p>[para 3.6.2 Delegation Rules] Chief Officers shall have full delegated power to approve the acquisition and disposal of any interest in property by the Council where the value does not exceed Level 2 (£25,000) provided the terms have been approved by the District Valuer, or the Council's valuer, and the Chief Finance Officer and the acquisition or disposal is a necessary part of a policy, scheme or plan approved by the Council.</p> <p>The Affordable Homes Director has authority to approve making land/property available at nil cost for affordable housing schemes, using the following mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accepting a higher level of shared ownership on appropriate affordable housing sites in order to cross-subsidise social rented housing; ▪ Accepting that some housing on affordable sites may need to be sold at full market value in order to cross-subsidise rented housing; ▪ Accepting a lower percentage of built units on S106 sites; and ▪ Accepting a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision of affordable housing on S106 sites <p>The above mechanisms to be subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The approval of the Portfolio Holders for Housing and Planning & Economic Development and appropriate local member(s); ▪ An annual limit of £1 million for land/property made available at nil cost, without reference to Cabinet; and ▪ Compliance with current planning policies and the available General Consent for disposal of land to Registered Social landlords under Section 	<p>Protocol for consultation on housing issues (April 2007). Applicable to Parish Councils and Local Members</p> <p>Disposal of Council land/property for development purposes (including affordable housing) – 42 days</p>

DISPOSALS		
Options	Decision Making	Consultation
	<p>25 of the Local Government Act 1988.</p> <p>For decision by Housing Portfolio Holder Disposal of Council interest in land or property where the value exceeds Level 2 (£25,000) up to and including Level 4 (£120,000) or where other conditions in para 3.6.2 of the Delegation Rules are not met.</p> <p>For decision by Cabinet Disposal of Council interest in land or property where the value exceeds Level 4 (£120,000) or where other conditions in para 3.6.2 of the Delegation Rules are not met.</p>	
Sale on the Open Market		
Proposed	The Director of Housing has authority to approve individual properties for sale on the open market; subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder and not exceeding an annual limit of £2M without reference to the Cabinet.	Local Member(s).
Current	<p>For decision by Housing Portfolio Holder Disposal of Council interest in land or property where the value exceeds Level 2 (£25,000) up to and including Level 4 (£120,000) or where other conditions in para 3.6.2 of the Delegation Rules are not met.</p> <p>For decision by Cabinet Disposal of Council interest in land or property where the value exceeds Level 4 (£120,000) or where other conditions in para 3.6.2 of the Delegation Rules are not met.</p>	<p>Not specific but could be considered as an 'issue' within the protocol for consultation on housing issues (April 2007) (applicable to Parish Councils and Local Members):</p> <p>For most issues/proposals a period of 42 days consultation is required.</p>
Shared Ownership and Equity/ Homesteading type schemes		
Proposed	See 'Sale on the Open Market' above (to count towards the annual limit of £2M)	Local Member(s).
Current	No formal procedure.	None. Unlikely to be considered under the Housing Consultation Protocol.

DISPOSALS		
Options	Decision Making	Consultation
Garage Sites		
Proposed	Same decision process as for disposal of properties	No change proposed.
Current	<p>Chief Officers shall have full delegated power to approve the acquisition and disposal of any interest in property by the Council where the value does not exceed Level 2 (£25,000) provided the terms have been approved by the District Valuer, or the Council's valuer, and the Chief Finance Officer and the acquisition or disposal is a necessary part of a policy, scheme or plan approved by the Council</p> <p>For decision by Housing Portfolio Holder Disposal of Council interest in land or property where the value exceeds Level 2 (£25,000) up to and including Level 4 (£120,000) or where other conditions in para 3.6.2 of the Delegation Rules are not met.</p> <p>For decision by Cabinet Disposal of Council interest in land or property where the value exceeds Level 4 (£120,000) or where other conditions in para 3.6.2 of the Delegation Rules are not met.</p>	As set out in the Garage Strategy 2011: With local residents, local community groups, parish council and elected members prior to a decision being made on its future.
Small areas of land with no potential for development, i.e. garden land		
Proposed	The Director of Housing has authority to approve or refuse the disposal of housing land for public amenity use or for use as garden land or otherwise improve the access or amenity of a dwelling where the value does not exceed Level 2 (£25,000); subject to the confirmation from Planning & New Communities that the land is not capable of development which will significantly increase its value. [Where there is potential development by another party – point 4.6.2 below applies].	Development Control, Planning & New Communities and the Local Member(s).
Current	<p>[para 3.6.2 Delegation Rules] Chief Officers shall have full delegated power to approve the acquisition and disposal of any interest in property by the Council where the value does not exceed Level 2 (£25,000) provided the terms have been approved by the District Valuer, or the Council's valuer, and the Chief Finance Officer and the acquisition or disposal is a necessary part of a policy, scheme or plan approved by the Council.</p> <p>The Affordable Homes Director has authority to approve or refuse the disposal</p>	<p>Protocol for consultation on housing issues (April 2007). Applicable to Parish Councils and Local Members</p> <p>Disposal of Council owned amenity or garden land to individuals - 42 days</p>

DISPOSALS		
Options	Decision Making	Consultation
	of housing land for public amenity use or for use as garden land or otherwise improve the access or amenity of a dwelling, subject to the approval of the local member(s) and (in the case of a proposed disposal) subject to the confirmation of the Planning and New Communities Director that the land is not capable of development which will significantly increase its value.	
Land where there is development potential or Ransom Strips that would unlock a development site		
Proposed	<p>The Director of Housing has authority to approve 'in principle' the sale of land ahead of any planning consent based on conditional options, such as a higher contribution of affordable housing. A non binding indicative value will be agreed at this stage but will be subject to the final scheme approved by planning, taking into account the provision of affordable housing, type and tenure.</p> <p>Following planning approval, the Director of Housing has authority to approve the sale of land; subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder and not exceeding an annual limit of £1M without reference to the Cabinet.</p>	Local Member(s). Consultation of development will be through the planning process.
Current	<p>Chief Officers shall have full delegated power to approve the acquisition and disposal of any interest in property by the Council where the value does not exceed Level 2 (£25,000) provided the terms have been approved by the District Valuer, or the Council's valuer, and the Chief Finance Officer and the acquisition or disposal is a necessary part of a policy, scheme or plan approved by the Council</p> <p>For decision by Housing Portfolio Holder Disposal of Council interest in land or property where the value exceeds Level 2 (£25,000) up to and including Level 4 (£120,000) or where other conditions in para 3.6.2 of the Delegation Rules are not met.</p> <p>For decision by Cabinet Disposal of Council interest in land or property where the value exceeds Level 4 (£120,000) or where other conditions in para 3.6.2 of the Delegation Rules are not met.</p>	<p>Protocol for consultation on housing issues (April 2007). Applicable to Parish Councils and Local Members</p> <p>Disposal of Council land/property for development purposes (including for affordable housing) - 42 days</p>

ACQUISITIONS		
	Decision Making	Consultation
New Build		
Proposed	For the purchase of land not already owned by the Council, the Director of Housing has authority to approve purchase of land not exceeding £250,000. This will be in accordance with the Council's budget framework and approval by the Housing Portfolio Holder. For land purchase exceeding £250,000, agreement must be sought from the Executive Director, acting as the S.151 Officer and subject to the approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. All land purchases will be made on a conditional offer subject to planning approval.	Local Member(s). Wider consultation of the proposed scheme will form an important aspect to the redevelopment of existing sites and also new developments within the New Build Strategy, which will involve the local community, local members and the parish council to help shape the future schemes.
Current	For decision by Housing Portfolio Holder Acquisition of leases or other ongoing commitment where the value exceeds Level 2 (£25,000) (to Council if budget provision not available).	None.
Purchase of individual Empty Properties		
Proposed	The Director of Housing has authority to approve the purchase of individual properties within the set budget, subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. All offers made are subject to contract.	Local Member(s).
Current	For decision by Housing Portfolio Holder Acquisition of leases or other ongoing commitment where the value exceeds Level 2 (£25,000) (to Council if budget provision not available).	None.
Purchase of 'off the shelf' Properties		
Proposed	The Director of Housing has authority to approve the purchase of 'off the shelf' properties within the set budget, subject to approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder. For 'package deals' that exceed £1M, agreement must be sought from the Executive Director, acting as the S.151 Officer. All offers made are subject to contract.	Local Member(s).
Current	For decision by Housing Portfolio Holder Acquisition of leases or other ongoing commitment where the value exceeds	None. New initiative.

ACQUISITIONS		
	Decision Making	Consultation
	Level 2 (£25,000) (to Council if budget provision not available).	
Sale to South Cambs Holdings Ltd		
Proposed	The Director of Housing has authority to approve sale of properties to South Cambs Holdings 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.	None required.
Current	None. New Initiative.	None. New Initiative

This page is left blank intentionally.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder

1 August 2013

AUTHOR/S: Director of Housing

UNDER-OCCUPATION POLICY**Purpose**

1. To seek approval from the Housing Portfolio Holder for the adoption of a policy covering how the Council responds to customers faced with a reduction in Housing Benefit and additional financial hardship due to Welfare Reform changes introduced in April 2013.
2. This is a key decision because it has significant implications for residents across more than one ward and was first published on 29 May 2013 in the Council's Forward Plan.

Recommendation

3. That the Housing Portfolio Holder approves the 'Under-occupation Policy' as set out in **Appendix A**.

Reasons for Recommendation

4. The introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 has led to cuts in the amount of housing benefit working age tenants receive if they are deemed to be under-occupying a rented property. A range of support options are available to tenants faced by these changes. This policy seeks to ensure a consistent approach is adopted by the Council when dealing with cases of under-occupation and benefit reductions.

Background

5. The Chancellor announced Government's plans to restrict housing benefit for under-occupying, working age social sector tenants in the June 2010 emergency budget. This led to the introduction of the Housing Benefit (Amendment) Regulation 2012 which came in to force on 1 April 2013. From this date housing benefit has been restricted for working age households where they are under-occupying their property by one or more bedrooms.
6. The reduction in housing benefit is a fixed percentage of the eligible rent payable at 14% for those considered to have one extra bedroom and 25% for two or more extra bedrooms. At an average rent of £95.38 per week for a three bedroom property, those under-occupying by one bedroom will need to make up the shortfall of approximately £13.35 per week and those under-occupying by two bedrooms will need to find an additional £23.85.

Considerations

7. There are currently 330 SCDC tenants affected by the under-occupation benefit changes, all of which have been contacted either through a home visit or by telephone. 309 tenants completed a questionnaire, of which 33% stated they would consider moving to a smaller property, 9% would consider taking in a lodger, 2% would find it useful to receive budgetary/financial advice and 15% are actively looking for work. As at 15 July 2013 this Council had 77 households under-occupied and asking for its assistance to downsize to a smaller property.
8. Currently 21 households have been moved to smaller accommodation via a direct let, of which 17 downsized by 1 bedroom and 4 downsizing by 2 bedrooms. This equates to approximately £16,762.20 per annum that would otherwise have been a shortfall in housing benefit and potential increase in rent arrears if tenants could not afford to pay. Vulnerable households in financial hardship can apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment to help meet this shortfall in housing benefit, however, this is a limited budget and will not be able to meet demand from all applicants.
9. Rent arrears data supports the assumption that these households are experiencing financial hardship as a result of the welfare reform changes. It is significant that 22 of the 77 households in arrears had clear rent accounts on 1 April 2013 but had rent arrears outstanding on 3 July 2013. Many of these households would find it virtually impossible financially to move house without support.

Options

10. Many organisations have introduced a range of measures in response to the welfare reform changes to help households downsize. These range from support and advice on organising the move to significant financial incentives paid to tenants to move. Organisations paying financial incentives tend to have a shortage of larger social housing in their area, for example Cambridge City Council who pay up to £1000 per move whether people are in receipt of housing benefit or not. Other organisations just support those households in financial hardship and affected by welfare reform changes/reduced housing benefit and this is the option we recommend.
11. Cambridge City Council carried out their own research recently which found that only around a third of households who downsized were influenced by the financial incentive to move. This supports National Housing Federation research carried out in 2011 which found that only a relatively small proportion of households were influenced by financial incentives in their decision to downsize. The research found that other factors are equally important such as providing support and information to those people wanting to downsize, helping organise removals or ensuring the property being offered was in good condition/in the right location. This is demonstrated in a recent case study attached at **Appendix B**.
12. At present we have discretion to help fund removal costs via housing management or Discretionary Housing Payment budgets where there is evidence of financial hardship. We would like to expand this scheme on a discretionary basis to offer a wider range of support services/incentives which will be tailored to individual needs from the list below:
 - Organise and pay for removals costs through a local approved contractor.
 - Time to hand in keys for the old property – up to 2 weeks tenancy overlap rent free on the old property.

- Organise additional cleaning and/or decorating of the property the tenant is due to move to (above the basic void standard).
 - Payment towards rent arrears at existing property to help facilitate move and prevent transfer of former tenant debt to new property.
 - Organise and pay for a room/s to be carpeted or for someone to take up and relay carpets in the new property.
 - Help with organising the move or paying for change of utilities or appliances e.g. disconnection and reconnection of gas appliances.
 - Help with organising or paying for any other reasonable costs associated with the move.
13. This proposed scheme is in recognition that one solution will not fit all. Some people may have savings to pay for the move but would have difficulty organising contractors to move possessions, disconnect and reconnect appliances or decorate a property. Other people may simply not be able to afford any additional expenditure.
14. These outline proposals are detailed in the attached policy document Appendix A, together with other options available to assist tenants affected by the welfare reforms, such as taking in a lodger, support in finding employment and money advice, etc.

Implications

15. Financial	The financial incentive scheme aimed at helping tenants downsize is likely to be an estimated maximum £21,000 per year (35 moves maximum) for the first two years then a reduction in direct lets due to under-occupation. Any expenditure to be authorised by the Housing Services Team Leader or Housing Options and Allocations Team Leader up to a maximum value of £600 per move.
Legal	The Council has a duty to comply with the Housing Benefit (Amendment) Regulation 2012 which introduced a size criteria for working age social housing tenants.
Staffing	None
Risk Management	Potential rent loss through increased rent arrears due to reductions in Housing Benefit eligibility being monitored closely and actioned in line with standard rent arrears recovery procedures. Supporting under-occupied households, of working age and in receipt of HB to downsize will help to minimise the risk of escalating rent arrears for these households.
Equality and Diversity	The policy has taken into account equality and diversity issues.
Equality Impact Assessment completed	Yes
Climate Change	Not applicable

Consultations

16. Extensive consultation has taken place with those tenants affected being written to initially in August 2012 offering home visits/telephone interviews/support. Over 400 under-occupation interviews have been completed either at home, over the telephone or at SCDC offices. Articles have been written in tenant newsletters covering all aspects of Welfare Reform and Under-occupation advising tenants to contact us with any concerns/queries. The subject has been raised at tenant forums and the Under-occupation Officer has attended some tenant forum/tenant surgery meetings. Further to requests from residents via tenant forum meetings frequently asked questions and answers covering Welfare Reform have been published on SCDC website.

Consultation with Children and Young People

17. None.

Effect on Strategic Aims

18. The Council will ensure that it continues to offer outstanding and sustainable quality of life for its residents.

Conclusions / Summary

19. The Policy will give officers and customers clear information about the support options and services the Council will offer tenants who are deemed to be under occupying their home.

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

Welfare Reform Act 2012
Housing Benefit (Amendment) Regulation 2012

Contact Officer: Peter Moston – Under-occupation Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713037

DRAFT



Under-occupation Policy

Published: August 2013

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 has led to cuts in the amount of housing benefit people receive if they are deemed to have a spare bedroom in their council or housing association home. This measure applies to housing benefit claimants of working age from 1st April 2013. South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) has prepared for this by identifying and contacting those tenants potentially affected and offering a range of opportunities to minimise the impact of these changes. This includes the option to downsize to a smaller property, access to an approved lodger scheme, advice and support in finding work or training and financial/benefits advice via Cambridge Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). SCDC housing and benefits staff are working closely with residents to offer advice and support to help minimise the financial impact of these changes on households including working closely with local partner organisations in the public and voluntary sector. SCDC has joined the Huntingdonshire Under-occupation Partnership Agreement to provide a joined up approach to tackling the issue of under-occupation in the sub region and to help share best practice.

2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Chancellor announced Government's plans to restrict Housing Benefit for under-occupying, working age social sector tenants in the June 2010 emergency budget. This led on to the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which allowed for the introduction of the Housing Benefit (Amendment) Regulation 2012 which came in to force on 1st April 2013. This new legislation introduced a size criteria for social housing tenants which is now in line with restrictions applied to the private rented sector under the local housing allowance. From 1st April 2013 housing benefit will be reduced for working age, social housing tenants deemed to be under-occupying their rented property. This does not apply to anyone of state pension credit age. Where one member of a couple receiving Housing Benefit is over state pension credit age then the size limit will not apply to them. This situation may alter with the introduction of Universal Credit.

3 UNDER-OCCUPATION DETERMINATION

- 3.1 The size criteria in the social rented sector will restrict housing benefit to allow for one bedroom for each person or couple living as part of the household with the following exceptions:
- Two children under 16 of same gender expected to share.
 - Two children under 10 expected to share regardless of gender.
 - Disabled tenant or partner who needs non-resident (not a member of the household) regular overnight care will be allowed an extra bedroom.

- Approved foster carers will be allowed an additional room so long as they have fostered a child, or become an approved foster carer in the last 12 months.
- Adult children in the armed forces will be treated as continuing to live at home when deployed on operations.
- Children who are unable to share a bedroom because of a severe disability.

- 3.2 Where parents who don't live together have shared care of their children, the children will be treated as living with the parent who is considered as responsible for them and provides their main home. The parent who is not considered to provide their main home will not be entitled to receive Housing Benefit for an extra room for their child/children.
- 3.3 Children that are living away, such as at university, are not included as a member of the household unless their absence is temporary (less than thirteen weeks or 52 weeks for students) and the young person concerned intends to return home.
- 3.4 Couples, where one partner has a disability, will still be expected to share a room under the legislation. If there is a reason that an extra room is necessary due to the disability the Council may be able to help with the extra rent through the Discretionary Housing Payment fund (see point 9. below).
- 3.5 There may be circumstances where someone in receipt of Housing Benefit would be considered to be under-occupying because of a death in their households. In these circumstances they would be protected and the size limit rules would not be applied until after 12 months or they moved home or there was another change of circumstances.
- 3.6 Where a tenant could previously afford to pay rent but finds themselves in a situation where they can no longer, for example because of a loss of job, provided they have not claimed Housing Benefit in the last 52 weeks, the size limit rules will not be applied for the first 13 weeks. They will be applied earlier than 13 weeks if the tenant moves home or there is another change of circumstances.

4 BEDROOM SIZE

- 4.1 There is no definition of a minimum bedroom size set out in legislation. The Department of Work and Pensions HB/CTB Circular A4/2012 – Adjudication and Operations circular states:- 'We will not be defining what we mean by a bedroom and in legislation there is no definition of a minimum bedroom size set out in regulations. It will be up to the landlord to accurately describe the property in line with the actual rent charged.'
- 4.2 Some residents have queried whether the small bedroom at their property is large enough to be deemed a habitable room and have referred to legislation set out in the 1985 Housing Act. However this legislation regarding minimum room sizes relates to a statutory determination of overcrowding and has no

other relevance. Given that overcrowding legislation accepts habitable rooms as bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms and kitchens it is unlikely that any social housing tenants will be statutorily overcrowded.

- 4.3 Before moving in to properties all SCDC tenants have agreed with and signed Tenancy Agreements accurately describing their properties in terms of the number of bedrooms and rent charged. Therefore the Council's policy is that the number of bedrooms stated on the signed Tenancy Agreement will be used to calculate housing benefit entitlement.
- 4.4 We will not be re-designating properties based on differing room sizes as a result of the Welfare Reform changes.

5 REDUCTION IN HOUSING BENEFIT

- 5.1 The reduction will be a fixed percentage of the housing benefit eligible rent for the property. The Government has set this at 14% for one extra bedroom and 25% for two or more extra bedrooms.

6 PAYMENT OF RENT

- 6.1 Any shortfall in rent following a reduction in housing benefit will need to be paid by the tenant to the Council.
- 6.2 If a tenant falls into arrears because of non payment of the shortfall, then the normal procedure for collection of rent arrears will be followed, including legal action where no attempt is made to clear the arrears.

7 OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT TENANTS AFFECTED BY A REDUCTION IN HOUSING BENEFIT

- 7.1 All tenants identified as being affected by the changes in housing benefit were initially made aware of the changes in October 2012 by letter and this was followed up through a home visit or telephone call to ensure tenants were aware of the implications and the options available to them.

7.2 Downsizing to smaller accommodation:

- The Council has employed a dedicated Under-occupation Officer to provide advice and support to those wishing to transfer to smaller accommodation.
- All lettings of rented social housing in the sub region is allocated through Home-link, which is a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Tenants wishing to transfer need to register with Home-link. Their application will be assessed and given a priority based on their housing circumstances. Applicants can then 'bid' for suitable properties which are advertised when available for letting.
- The Allocations Policy was reviewed in 2012 in consultation with partners, members, organisations and applicants, and was approved by the Housing

Portfolio Holder for implementation from 1st April 2013. The new Allocations Policy gives greater priority to tenants who are under-occupying, with highest priority given to those households under-occupying by two or more bedrooms.

- Tenants wishing to transfer to smaller accommodation who are affected by a reduction in housing benefit due to being under-occupied may be offered a direct let where they have been unsuccessful in finding a suitable property through Home-Link. Decisions on direct lets where the property is not advertised through Home-Link can be authorised by the Housing Options and Allocations Team Leader or the Housing Management Services Team Leader.
- Support to move scheme. Where tenants need help to downsize SCDC has a range of discretionary support it can offer which will be tailored to individual needs from the list below:
 1. Organise and pay for removals costs through a local approved contractor.
 2. Time given to hand in keys for the old property – up to 2 weeks rent free.
 3. Organise additional cleaning and/or decorating of the property the tenant is due to move to (above the basic void standard).
 4. Payment towards rent arrears at existing property to help facilitate move and prevent transfer of former tenant debt to new property.
 5. Organise and pay for a room/s to be carpeted or for someone to take up and refit carpets in the new property.
 6. Help with organising the move or paying for change of utilities or appliances e.g. disconnection and reconnection of gas appliances.
 7. Help with organising or paying for any other reasonable costs associated with the move.

Support of up to £600 per move can be awarded and has to be authorised by the Housing Services Team Leader or Housing Options and Allocations Team Leader.

7.3 Taking in a Lodger

- All secure and flexible tenants have the right to take in a lodger as long as their property is not considered to be overcrowded. They must inform the Council of who is living with them.
- Introductory tenants will need to seek the permission of the Council before they can take in a lodger.
- A guidance booklet has been published to give advice and support to tenants considering taking in a lodger.

7.4 Approved Lodger Scheme

- SCDC is working in partnership with King Street Housing Society to operate an approved lodger scheme.
- The scheme is beneficial in two ways in that it helps those seeking accommodation in South Cambs who otherwise would find it difficult to afford private sector rents and it helps those households identified as under-occupying who stand to lose housing benefit due to the welfare reform changes.
- The scheme has a co-ordinator employed by King Street Housing Society who will help people throughout the process. Support is provided to help

ensure a successful lodger placement including conducting a thorough initial assessment which includes a risk assessment and preparing all the relevant paperwork.

7.5 Financial/Benefits Advice

- SCDC is working in partnership with Cambridge CAB to help facilitate good financial advice for our customers. Cambridge CAB can advise on; budgeting and saving; getting good deals; claiming the right benefits and dealing with debts. Appointments are available with experienced CAB advisers at SCDC offices or there is a visiting/telephone support service if people have transport difficulties.

7.6 Help with finding work

- SCDC has established links with a local housing association – CHS Group who offer free employment, education, training and volunteering advice. One-to-one support is provided to tenants in the comfort of their own home to help with preparing CV's, applying for jobs and developing interview techniques, as well as signposting to training and further education.
- As part of the development of the Council's Tenant led scrutiny function, tenants have the opportunity to participate in a voluntary role to help shape the housing service. Training, support and mentoring will be provided by the Council to enable tenants to gain additional skills which can assist them in finding employment.

8 UNDER-OCCUPATION PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

8.1 The Partnership Agreement was initially established in Huntingdon between the local authority and registered providers. South Cambridgeshire District Council joined the partnership in July 2012 with the view to widen the scheme out across the sub-region. The aim of the Partnership Agreement is to agree a joint approach to work pro-actively and share good practice to reduce under-occupation in the social rented stock. Actions include

- Data collection and monitoring
- Providing consistent advice and information
- Targeting the development of new affordable housing
- Review the Home-link Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- Investigate incentives to move and funding available

9 DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS (DHP)

- In certain circumstances a tenant may be entitled to a payment from the Discretionary Housing Payment fund. This is a fund administered by the Council for those considered to be in real need of additional help with their housing costs, which includes both rent and council tax. The Government give

local authorities a limited amount of money to pay out each year as DHP's and we cannot spend any more than this.

- Awards of DHP's will be based on a detailed household financial assessment and decisions will be confirmed in writing. A DHP leaflet is available to tenants providing further details.
- There is an appeals procedure if people do not agree with our decision not to award a DHP.

10 APPEAL

10.1 If a tenant disagrees with a decision based on this policy they can formally request an appeal. The appeal will be heard by a panel that will include officers who were not party to the original decision. The appeal panel will consider the following:

- Whether the property is correctly described in the Tenancy Agreement.
- Whether the Council is correct to reduce housing benefit entitlement based on the household details.

11 SERVICE STANDARDS

11.1 Our commitments:

- We will be clear and transparent to tenants and housing register applicants regarding the new Welfare Reform changes.
- We will publish information about advice and assistance available and ensure that services are accessible.
- We will give our best endeavours working with partners to prevent financial hardship wherever possible. We will promote welfare benefit and independent money advice to customers as well as our in house advice services.
- We will have a fair system of administering and awarding Discretionary Housing Payments based on a detailed financial assessment and will refer people to financial/benefits advice services.

This page is left blank intentionally.

Appendix 'B'

Case Study supporting the Financial Incentive Scheme to downsize

Mrs X – SCDC single tenant lives in a 2 bedroom bungalow and is keen to move to a 1 bedroom bungalow. Savings are being used to pay the rent (14% reduced HB due to under-occupation by one bedroom). Mrs X has some depression/anxiety issues and is worried about moving. The bungalow she currently lives in is in good condition and is relatively modern. Mrs X was recently offered a 1 bedroom bungalow but refused it due to the condition of the bungalow. The property had received standard, minimal basic void works prior to being offered to Mrs X. A financial payment of say £500 is unlikely to have made a difference to her decision not to move. However if we had carried out some additional cleaning/decoration works and helped with organising the move this may have made a difference for this tenant who would have otherwise had difficulty organising the move and decoration works themselves.

This page is left blank intentionally.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder

1 August 2013

AUTHOR/S: Director of Housing

DISPOSAL OF GARAGE SITE OFF MILL LANE, BASSINGBOURN**Purpose**

1. To seek agreement by the Housing Portfolio Holder for the disposal of the Council's garage site off Mill Lane, Bassingbourn as outlined red on plan.

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Portfolio Holder agrees in principle that the site is 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).

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The site is surplus to Council requirements.
4. There is local support for a new pub on the adjacent pub site and this would benefit from the use of the garage site as an ancillary parking and garden area.
5. There is local opposition to the use of the garage site for new housing.

Background

6. The site in question is one of two garage sites serving the Council's estate at The Fillance and Mill Lane, Bassingbourn.
7. The site consists of 10 units (nos 1-11), 5 of which are currently rented. The other site off The Fillance also has 10 units (nos 12-21), 4 of which are rented.
8. The forecourt of the site (1-11) is large and has been subject to anti-social behaviour by young people with cars and motor bikes.
9. 2 Mill Lane and 25 The Fillance both have a vehicular right of way over the site to access their own on-plot garages and there is a pedestrian access over the site for residents of The Fillance, via a path that enters one corner of the site.
10. On 20 March 2013 the Housing Portfolio Holder decided the following:

"To defer making a decision for six months to allow time for interested parties to put together a business case for the site and the former public house adjacent it to be redeveloped for use by the community of Bassingbourn. Tenancies of the garages on site would be ended within the next six months and, after that time, the Housing Portfolio Holder would decide whether to authorise a community use or exercise his power to sell following a reassessment of the land value."

11. The pub site has now been sold to a developer who proposes to redevelop the site as a new public house. A request has been received from the developer to purchase the garage site to use as a parking and garden area for the new pub, subject to planning permission. The developer has made the Council an offer of £30,000 for the garage site.
12. A valuation of the garage site had initially been requested from Pocock & Shaw, who assessed it at £40,000 if sold on the basis of its existing use. Pocock & Shaw were then asked to reassess the value of the site to serve as a parking and garden area for a new pub and their view is that acquisition of the land would not add any more to the value of the pub than the existing use figure and it would therefore be appropriate to offer the site for sale on this basis, provided that overage provision is included with the sale.

Considerations

13. The site is being considered for disposal as it is surplus to the Council's requirements and attracts anti-social behaviour. It is proposed that the 10 units on the other garage site off The Fillance will be rebuilt and will be sufficient to satisfy the local demand for garages to rent.
14. The site itself, following demolition of the garage units, has the potential for the development of 2 - 4 small affordable dwellings but there is local opposition to such a proposal. The site's value if offered on the open market for housing development, would be approximately £100,000.
15. There is local support for a new pub and for the garage site to be part of this proposal so although the site would be sold at less than best consideration, it would be of benefit to the local community.
16. The developer has offered a figure for the site that is lower than the assessed value to allow for the expense of demolishing the garages and removing the asbestos. Based on quotations received for other garage demolitions and removal of asbestos, the cost of this work is estimated at £7,000 - £10,000.

Options

17. Option One – Offer the site 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.
18. Option Two – Place the site for sale on the open market at development value.
19. Option Three – Consider developing the site for new Council housing.

Implications

20. Financial	With Option One, the Council would benefit from some financial return Option Two would bring the maximum financial return to the Council With Option Three, the Council could benefit from additional social housing on the site
Legal	Legal advice would be sought to carry out any sale.
Staffing	None
Risk Management	No risks associated with sale.
Equality and Diversity	None
Equality Impact Assessment completed	No Not relevant
Climate Change	None

Consultations

21. Councillor Cathcart's previous comment on this was:

"I am still hopeful that the pub could be opened again as a public house for the local community. In the past the pub has suffered from inadequate parking and the incorporation of part of the existing District Council car park into the environs of the Pear Tree would make it a more attractive and viable proposition for a future business. Although the Pub has been closed for over a year, there are plenty of examples of pubs being reopened again and there is widespread support in the local community for the pub to open again."

He now supports the sale of the site to the purchaser of the pub site at £30,000, as long as it will be used only as a parking and amenity area to serve the proposed new pub.

22. Bassingbourn Parish Council's previous comments were that they hoped that The Pear Tree would remain as a public house and they would not support any application for change of use to residential.
23. Residents living adjacent the site at 2 Mill Lane, 23 and 25 The Fillance and 65 North End were previously consulted on the future of the garage site. The only response was from the owners of 65 North End, who strongly object to any new housing being built on the garage site due to concerns regarding overlooking. They would prefer the site to be used for parking either for the use of the local community or to serve a new development or new pub on the pub site (they would prefer a new pub).
24. The Housing Development and Enabling Manager supports Option One.

Effect on Strategic Aims

25. **AIM: To make sure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer outstanding and sustainable quality of life for our residents**
A sale of the site to support the future use of the adjacent pub site as a new pub, subject to any planning permissions, should ensure that the site is used to benefit the local community.

Conclusions / Summary

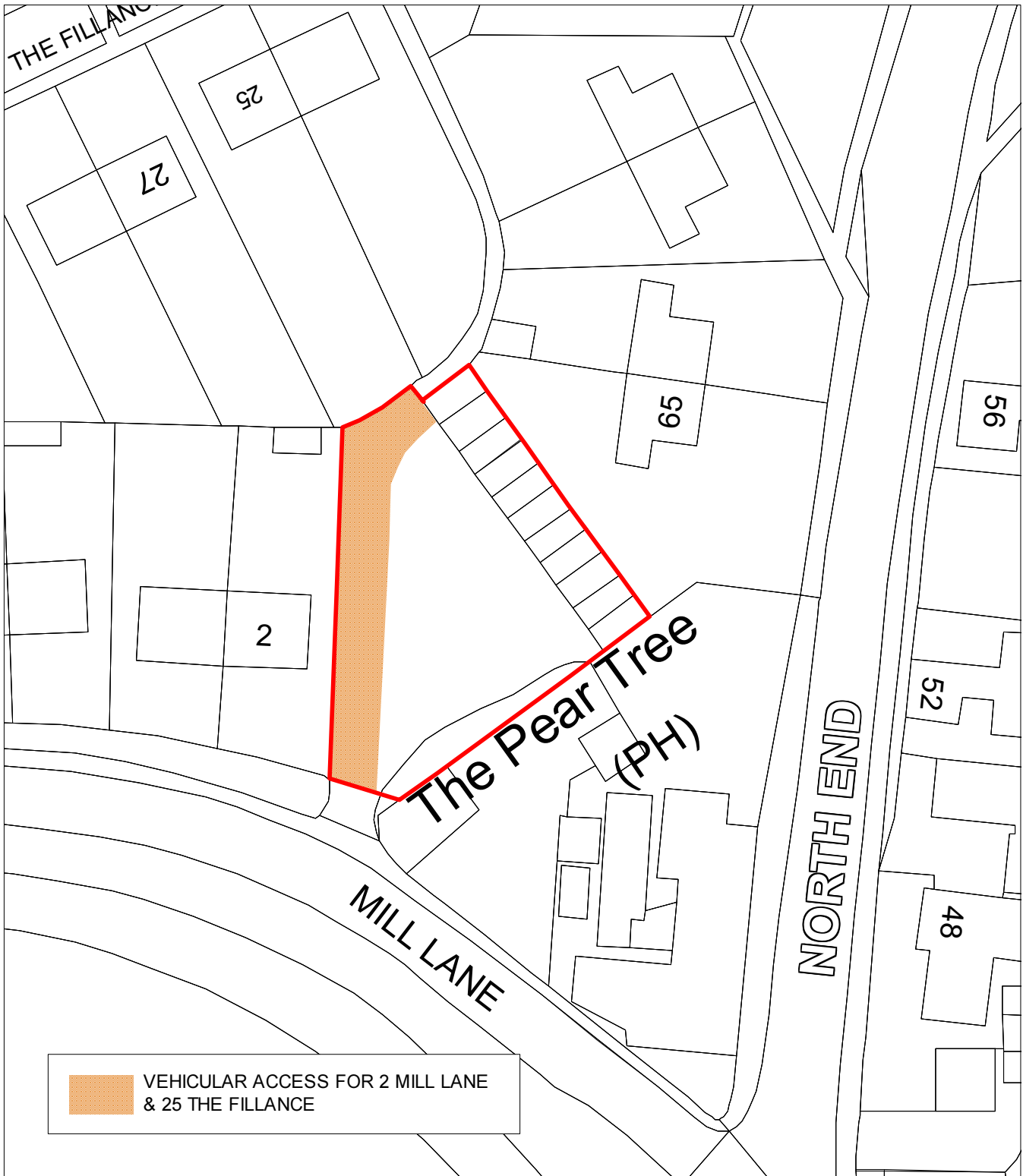
26. The garage site is surplus to Council requirements. It has both its own development potential and the potential to serve as a parking and amenity area for a proposed new pub on the adjacent site, which has now been sold. With local opposition to new housing on the site and a preference for a newly opened pub, it is recommended to agree in principle to a sale of the site to the developer of the pub site, subject to planning permission being obtained.

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

None.

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

GARAGE SITE OFF MILL LANE, BASSINGBOURN



BASED ON THE ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPPING WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE ©CROWN COPYRIGHT. UNAUTHORISED REPRODUCTION INFRINGES CROWN COPYRIGHT AND MAY LEAD TO PROSECUTION OR CIVIL PROCEEDINGS.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL LICENCE NO 100022500 2012

Scale approx 1:500



This page is left blank intentionally.

Housing Portfolio Holder – Work Plan 2013-14

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
16 October 2013	Service Plan objectives	Non-Key		Decision	Stephen Hills
	Homelessness Strategy	Key	2	Decision	Sue Carter / Heather Wood
	Design and Quality Charter	Non Key		Decision	Schuyler Newstead
	Residents Involvement Strategy update	Non-Key		Decision	Gill Anderton
	New Build Strategy update	Non-Key		Monitoring	Schuyler Newstead
	Sheltered Housing Contract Tender update	Non-Key		Monitoring	Tracey Cassidy
	DHP (HRA) extension to funding request (if not taken outside meeting)	Key	1	Decision	Stephen Hills
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 ?

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)).