

HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2015

DECISIONS

Set out below is a summary of the decisions taken at the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on Wednesday, 18 November 2015. Decisions made by the Portfolio Holder will be subject to call-in. Recommendations made to the Cabinet or to the Council are not subject to call-in. The wording used does not necessarily reflect the actual wording that will appear in the minutes.

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

1. **SUB-REGIONAL HOME-LINK ALLOCATIONS AND LETTINGS POLICY - UPDATES AND AMENDMENTS**

The Housing Portfolio Holder **APPROVED** the amendments to the Home-Link Allocations and Lettings Policy.

Other Options Considered:

1. To approve the recommendations set out in Appendix 1 of the report unless there are any significant responses from the consultation exercise.
2. To ask officers to review the proposed changes to take into account comments by the Portfolio Holder and to bring it back for decision as soon as possible.

Reason For Decision: This is a not key decision but is required to ensure consistency with partner local authorities and to reflect recent legal advice.

2. **SPENDING PROGRAMME FOR COMMUTED SUMS**

The Housing Portfolio Holder **APPROVED** Option A to:

- a) note the current position of the commuted sum budget
- b) agree that the default position for future funding should be to contribute to the Council's own new-build programme.
- c) agree that where monies cannot be spent within the set timescale, the funding shall be offered to housing associations where a need for additional resources is required to make an affordable housing scheme viable. This can be offered in conjunction with unspent Right to Buy receipts.

Other Options Considered:

Option A:

To note the current position of the commuted sum budget and, notwithstanding the committed and earmarked schemes, agree that the default position for future funding should be to contribute to the Council's own new-build programme. Where monies cannot be spent within the set timescale, funding to be offered to other housing providers where a need for additional resources is required to make a scheme viable. This may be offered in conjunction with unspent Right to Buy receipts, to ensure funds are redistributed within the District and not returned to Government. This is the recommended option as it will provide an alternative funding stream to support the delivery of new council homes as set out in the Council's New Build Strategy 2015-18 or help to fund additional affordable homes in the District by working with registered providers.

Option B:

To note the current position of the commuted sum budget and agree that all future funding other than where it is already approved should be to contribute to the Council's own new-build programme. This option is not recommended as the potential schemes earmarked may become unviable.

Option C:

To note the current position of the commuted sum budget and agree an annual bidding round for housing providers, including the Council, to bid for funds. This option is not recommended as the amount of commuted sum money available is insufficient to be able to proportionately fund the provision of affordable housing across the District resulting in the Council not able to meet the expectations of housing providers.

Option D:

To note the current position of the commuted sum budget and continue to consider requests on an ad hoc basis. This does not provide clarity on the allocation of commuted sum monies with the risk that monies not spent will have to be paid back to the developer.

Reason For Decision: The 1% rent reduction per year over the next four years will have a significant impact on the Council's ability to invest in its own new-build programme to provide new affordable housing. Therefore, the default position that future allocations of commuted sum money should be to invest into the Council's own new build programme will provide an alternative funding stream to support delivery as set out in the Council's New Build Strategy 2015-18.

The option to fund other schemes where it is unlikely that the money will be spent by the Council within the set timescales will ensure that we can meet our obligations towards the provision of affordable housing and are not required to return monies to the developer. Likewise, it is recommended that Right to Buy receipts that cannot be used to match fund Council developments, should be offered to housing associations to ensure funds are redistributed within the District to provide affordable housing, rather than returning back to Government with the potential of increased interest charges applied.

3. AFFORDABLE HOMES DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2016/17

The Housing Portfolio Holder **ENDORSED** the Affordable Homes Service Plan 2016/17.

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

Reason For Decision: A list of service projects needs to be agreed in the autumn to enable service and financial planning to be put in place for effective delivery by April 2016. The proposed list represents a continuation of key projects already underway and a series of new projects designed to take forward key developments identified in previous years work and to further enhance the service to customers.

4. EQUALITY SCHEME 2015-2020 (2015-2017 VERSION)

The Housing Portfolio Holder **ENDORSED** the final draft Equality Scheme for 2015-2020 (2015-2017 version), subject to the amendments suggested at the Portfolio Holder meeting.

Any further suggestions for amendments were to be sent to the Equality and Diversity Officer by 25 November 2015, for approval by the Housing Portfolio Holder.

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

Reason For Decision: The Housing Portfolio Holder commented on and endorsed an earlier version of the Equality Scheme on 18 March 2015. The Equality Scheme 2015 – 2020 has been developed to provide closer alignment with the Corporate Plan for the same period and to reflect the latest data on the community profile of South Cambridgeshire.

In addition, it is necessary to agree priorities at this stage in order to enable effective planning and resourcing and to demonstrate that the Council is compliant with the second specific duty of the Public Sector Equality Duty as detailed in paragraph 7 of this report.