

HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2016

DECISIONS

Set out below is a summary of the decisions taken at the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on Wednesday, 27 January 2016. 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. SHELTERED HOUSING ALARM SYSTEM AND CHARGING REVIEW

The Housing Portfolio Holder **APPROVED**:

- 1) Option A – To change the alarm systems to the Lifeline system.
- 2) Option E – To advise residents that from 1 April 2016 all will be liable to pay £3 per week for the alarm service whether they are on benefits or not.
- 3) Option F – Give residents the option of not having an alarm and therefore not having to pay for a system unless they opt for a Lifeline system.
- 4) Option G – Where the resident has no telephone line for the Council to bear the cost of installing the line and either adding a weekly charge to the alarm charge or passing responsibility to the tenant if they wish to use the line for any other reason than an alarm system.
- 5) Option I – Charge sheltered residents £3 per week to encourage take up and ensure the scheme remains a designated sheltered housing scheme.

Other Options Considered: The options for considerations for the alarms:

- A. To change the alarm systems to the Lifeline system. The Lifeline system is less expensive than the hard wired option delivers value for money and is sufficiently flexible to meet tenant's needs and wishes. Upgrades can be installed as technology advances.
- B. To upgrade the hardwired system. This is more costly than the Lifeline systems and does not provide the flexibility that tenants are seeking. The current systems last for approximately 20 years but with the advances in technology maybe obsolete in 5 years.
- C. Not to upgrade the hard wired system but to change them to Lifeline alarms as they fail. The systems vary from good to poor from the survey but can breakdown at any time with no warning thus leaving tenants vulnerable in the event of an emergency.

The options for consideration for during the transition phase starting 1 April 2016:

- D. To advise residents of the change to the funding but opt to continue to support tenants from 1 April 2016 by not charging the £3 per week for the alarm system pending the upgrade of the system. This will however have a significant impact on the HRA budget.
- E. To advise residents that from 1 April 2016 all will be liable to pay £3 per week

for the alarm service whether they are on benefits or not.

Upgraded Scheme options:

- F. Give residents the option of not having an alarm and therefore not having to pay a system unless they opt for a Lifeline alarm.
- G. Where the resident has no telephone line for the Council to bear the cost of installing the line and either adding a weekly charge to the alarm charge or passing responsibility to the tenant if they wish to use the line for any other reason than the alarm system.
- H. Charge the Lifeline market cost of £4.43 per week to sheltered residents.
- I. Charge sheltered residents £3 per week to encourage take up and ensure the scheme remains as a designated sheltered housing scheme.

Reason For Decision: The hardwired emergency alarm systems currently installed in the schemes are failing, and do not meet the needs of increasingly frail residents or their aspiration to have a flexible system. The subsidy received from Cambridgeshire County Council for the provision of an alarm service for tenants who are in receipt of housing benefit will cease in April 2016. To continue to subsidise the alarm charge will incur a charge to the HRA of in excess of £126,000 annually.

2. **TRANSFER/SALE OF LAND AT OSP 148, CHURCH LANE, GREAT EVERS DEN**

The Housing Portfolio Holder:

- a) **APPROVED** the transfer of land to Accent Nene at nil value
- b) **AGREED** a commuted sums grant of £100,000 to support the financial viability of the provision of ten affordable homes (Option A).

Other Options Considered:

Option A: To approve the transfer of land to Accent Nene at nil value and to agree a commuted sums grant of £100,000 to support the financial viability for the provision of ten affordable homes. This option is recommended as it supports the social wellbeing of the area in meeting the needs for affordable housing, as set out in the Housing Strategy 2012-2016 and supports the City Deal commitment to provide 1,000 additional homes.

Option B: To approve the transfer of land to Accent Nene for the sum of £100,000 based on the land valuation and/or reject the request for £100,000 grant funding. This option is not recommended as either scenario would mean the scheme would become financially unviable.

Option C: To approve the sale of land to a neighbouring resident based on the highest offer of £65,000. This option is not recommended because it does not represent value for money in terms of the social wellbeing of the area in providing much needed additional affordable housing or meets the Council's key objectives.

Option D: To reject all options above. This would mean the loss of an additional 10 affordable homes for local people in the Eversdens,

resulting in abortive costs accrued by Accent Nene and potential reputational damage to the Council's partnership working with housing providers in the District.

Reason For Decision: This option is recommended as it supports the social wellbeing of the area in meeting the needs for affordable housing, as set out in the Housing Strategy 2012-2016 and supports the City Deal commitment to provide 1000 additional homes.