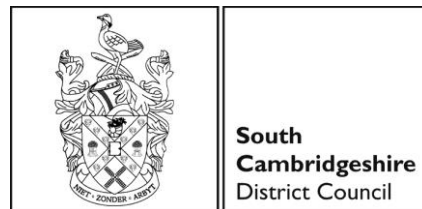


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19 January 2016

To: Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder

Anna Bradnam  
Jose Hales  
Philippa Hart  
Hazel Smith  
Bunty Waters

Opposition Spokesman  
Opposition Spokesman  
Opposition Spokesman  
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 **SWANSLEY A&B, GROUND FLOOR** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **WEDNESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2016 at 5.30 p.m.**

Yours faithfully  
**JEAN HUNTER**  
Chief Executive

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

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<b>AGENDA</b>		<b>PAGES</b>
<b>PROCEDURAL ITEMS</b>		
<b>1.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b> The Portfolio Holder is asked to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2015 as a correct record.	<b>1 - 4</b>
<b>DECISION ITEMS</b>		
<b>3.</b>	<b>Sheltered Housing Alarm System and Charging Review (Key)</b>	<b>5 - 10</b>
<b>STANDING ITEMS</b>		
<b>4.</b>	<b>Tenant Participation Group</b>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Housing Portfolio Holder Work Programme</b> The Portfolio Holder will maintain, for agreement at each meeting, a Forward Plan identifying all matters relevant to the Portfolio which it is believed are likely to be the subject of consideration and / or decision by the Portfolio Holder, or recommendation to, or referral by, the Portfolio Holder to Cabinet, Council, or any other constituent part of the Council. The plan will be updated as necessary. The Portfolio Holder will be responsible for the content and accuracy of the forward plan.	<b>11 - 12</b>

**CONFIDENTIAL DECISION ITEM - MEMBERS ONLY**

The press and public are likely to be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act).

6. **Transfer/Sale of Land at OSP 148, Church Lane, Great Eversden** 13 - 16
7. **Date of next meeting**  
Wednesday 16 March 2016 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.

**OUR VALUES**

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

- Working Together
- Integrity
- Dynamism
- Innovation

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR VISITORS TO SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HALL**

### **Notes to help those people visiting the South Cambridgeshire District Council offices**

While we try to make sure that you stay safe when visiting South Cambridgeshire Hall, you also have a responsibility for your own safety, and that of others.

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#### **Emergency and Evacuation**

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- **Do not** use the lifts to leave the building. If you are unable to use stairs by yourself, the emergency staircase landings have fire refuge areas, which give protection for a minimum of 1.5 hours. Press the alarm button and wait for help from Council fire wardens or the fire brigade.
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#### **Disturbance by Public**

If a member of the public interrupts proceedings at a meeting, 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. The meeting will be suspended until order has been restored.

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# Agenda Item 2

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on  
Wednesday, 18 November 2015 at 5.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Mark Howell

### Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors: Val Barrett, Anna Bradnam, Kevin Cuffley, Jose Hales, David McCraith, Hazel Smith, Bunty Waters

### Officers:

Anita Goddard	Housing Operational Services Manager
Stephen Hills	Director of Housing
Paul Williams	Equality and Diversity Officer
Julie Fletcher	Head of Housing Strategy

## 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mark Howell declared a non-pecuniary interest as an employee of the Papworth Trust.

## 2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

## 3. SUB-REGIONAL HOME-LINK ALLOCATIONS AND LETTINGS POLICY - UPDATES AND AMENDMENTS

The Director of Housing presented the proposed updates and amendments to the Sub-Regional Home-link Policy. These were discussed:

- Regarding the amendments proposed to the policy in relation to unacceptable behaviour, it was clarified that this went beyond wear and tear to properties. 'Unacceptable behaviour' was not legally defined in the policy and Members were informed that discretion would be applied and individual circumstances taken into account with regards to this.
- Clarification was provided around the 'Right to Move' guidance. Members were informed that this had been introduced by the Government in order to support residents' efforts to get into employment. The amendments suggested to the Council's policy reflected this guidance, with property needing to reflect residents' work needs.

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

## 4. SPENDING PROGRAMME FOR COMMUTED SUMS

The Head of Housing Strategy presented the report setting out the planned spending programme to ensure that commuted sum money, received in lieu of affordable housing, was spent on the provision of affordable housing within specified time limits.

It was clarified that the commuted sum for Little Wilbraham had been specified by Section 106. If this was not spent on affordable housing in Little Wilbraham by April 2017, the sum would have to be given back to the developer. Members were informed that options would be looked at for spending this money within the timescale.

Members were informed of the system that was in place to monitor Section 106 payments and the deadlines for spending these. Little Wilbraham was the only village in the district with outstanding Section 106 monies to be spent.

Councillor Hazel Smith declared an interest as Treasurer of Emmaus and queried the committed funding for this scheme, as detailed in the report. It was clarified that the Emmaus scheme, for which planning approval was being sought, had been earmarked as a likely scheme if planning was approved.

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.

## **5. AFFORDABLE HOMES DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2016/17**

The Director of Housing presented an update on the revised Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2016/17.

Members were informed that the Service Plan reflected recent Government policy announcements but allowed for when more detail of these was known. This would be presented to the Housing Portfolio Holder again in March 2016.

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

## **6. EQUALITY SCHEME 2015-2020 (2015-2017 VERSION)**

The Equality and Diversity Officer presented the final draft of the Equality Scheme for 2015-2020 (2015-2017 version).

Discussion ensued and issues raised were:

- The Local Member for Melbourn raised the Melbourn Mobile Community Warden scheme. 25% of people under this scheme had dementia and thanks to the scheme were able to remain in their own homes rather than having to go into residential care. Lack of funding of the scheme was raised. It was advised that this was an issue for the Leader of the Council.
- The Local Member for Milton informed Members that there was only one community care warden to cover Milton.

The Director of Housing informed Members that he sat on the new County Council Ageing Well Group and would reflect the points raised at this forum.

- With regards to the Together for Families partnership (TFF) the Portfolio Holder requested that the work that TFF was doing in South Cambridgeshire be outlined in the Equality scheme, if this information was available.
- The life expectancy of Gypsy and Travellers was noted and it was clarified that this was compared to the settled community.
- The total household figure for the district would be checked.
- Under '4.4 The Council as a Service Provider', the exact figure for the number of

homes being managed would be provided.

The Council's Equality Objectives were presented. The Equality Officer clarified that the objectives were kept as broad as possible. Any further suggestions with regard to these objectives would be sent to the Equality Officer by 25 November 2015. The objectives were discussed:

- Under 6.3.1, 'short period' would be amended to 'sustained period'.
- Members were informed that an officer had been recruited to Housing, to support the Gypsy and Traveller community in the district. Another officer would be recruited to Planning. The officer that had been recruited to Housing would be invited to attend the next Housing Portfolio Holder meeting.
- Members were informed that a Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessment was being undertaken.

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

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.

#### **7. TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP**

The Chairman of the Tenant Participation Group (TPG) provided an update on the TPG. It was hoped that the TPG would start a new project in the New Year.

#### **8. FORWARD PLAN**

The Housing Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the work programme.

#### **9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 16 March 2015 at 5.30pm.

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

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**Report To:** Housing Portfolio Holder  
**Lead Officer:** Director of Housing

27 January 2016

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## Sheltered Housing Alarm System and Charging Review

### Purpose

1. The report seeks to inform the Housing Portfolio Holder on the need to upgrade the current emergency alarm systems and the changes to the funding of the hardwired alarm systems in the designated sheltered housing schemes. Decisions on both aspects of the report are required.
2. This is a key decision as it;
  - a. Incurs significant expenditure to support the existing alarm charging mechanism and to bring the failing alarm systems up to date.
  - b. It will impact on all the Councils 43 sheltered housing schemes, 14 tenants remaining on the group alarm schemes and all residents of the sheltered properties, including leaseholders.

Permission has been given by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee to present this report.

### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder approves options A, E, F, G and I in paragraph 20.

### Reasons for Recommendations

4. 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

### Background

5. In April 2016 the subsidy which is a legacy from the Governments Supporting People Fund will cease. This funding is currently provided to help support tenants meet the cost of the alarm system on schemes that are in receipt of housing benefit. This was a cost met previously in whole by the Supporting People scheme.

6. Since April 2014, the contribution from the Supporting People Fund has been set by Cambridgeshire County Council at £00.50 per week per tenant. The total received was based on an estimate of the percentage at any given time of residents that were likely to be in receipt of any level of housing benefit. The HRA is currently subsidising the cost of the alarms by approximately £126,000 annually which has been fully budgeted for.
7. Recent Government changes that will impact on the HRA mean that any further subsidies could be at the detriment of core services.
8. Residents, including leaseholders, not in receipt of housing benefit in sheltered schemes pay £3 (£3.58 for Group Alarms) per week for the hard wired alarm system. This charge in schemes has recently been reviewed and is deemed to be a realistic charge based on the actual costs of provision of the alarm service.
9. Lifeline is an alarm service run by the Council on a commercial basis. The charges are £4.43 per week and £20 for the initial installation. The cost of purchasing one system is £122 and £115 each if orders in excess of 500 are placed. The Keysafe which is an essential part of the service is required to enable access in the event of an emergency. Currently all sheltered housing properties have Keysafes fitted.
10. The alarm systems in the sheltered schemes were surveyed in 2013 by Tunstall. All systems, with the exception of Elm Court, Over which is excluded from this report, are old and failing. In order to continue to provide an alarm service when the hardwired system has failed Lifeline systems have been installed. To date three hard wired alarm systems have completely failed.

### **Considerations**

11. A survey of all tenants on sheltered schemes has been undertaken. Out of 1307 surveys sent out 1082 (83%) were returned. In summary the majority of tenants contact their Estates Officer by telephone; the alarms are predominantly used to call for help in emergencies and providing a sense of safety and reassurance. 86% of respondents said they would have a Lifeline Alarm system if the current system was not in place. Nearly half of respondents felt it was important to have a choice as to whether they had the alarm service. Significantly over half of those who responded would not be willing to pay for an upgraded alarm system.
12. The Tenants Scrutiny Review of Sheltered Housing highlighted that the profile of sheltered housing residents has changed over time with many residents being more active and some still working. They recommended that the alarm systems in sheltered housing were reviewed as tenants object to paying for an alarm system that they neither need nor want.
13. The cost of upgrading all the hardwired schemes is approximately £500k. A new hardwired system would meet all the tenants needs and have greater functionality than the present system such as fall detectors, movement sensors etc., but it would not enable tenants and leaseholders of sheltered schemes a choice of whether they have it or not.
14. The cost of installing Lifeline alarms will cost in the region of £135,000 based on 80% of all sheltered housing residents signing up to have an Lifeline alarm system. There will be an expected minimal cost of installing telephone lines to those properties without a telephone line. A survey of all residents will be undertaken to ascertain how many will be installed.

15. Whatever option is selected the upgrading of systems either through hardwired systems or Lifeline it will have to be phased in over 2016/17. It will take approximately one year based on converting a scheme per week on average, using existing staff, to change systems from hardwired to Lifeline Alarms.
16. As of April 2016 there will be no funding for the alarms and the service has no recourse to be paid for other than by tenants and leaseholders in sheltered schemes. It is not an eligible charge under housing benefit regulations.
17. A £3 per week charge to tenants currently in receipt of housing benefit may be difficult for some tenants to pay. There is a risk therefore that some residents who need an alarm system would be unwilling to have one and pay for it. The Estates Officers would be aware of these people and work with them to ensure they have all the benefits they are entitled to and refer them to support services where appropriate.
18. Some tenants do not have a telephone line which is required for the Lifeline system. To date the Council has undertaken to install the phone line and bear that expense unless the resident wants to use the line for personal telephone calls. If this is the case they take over the responsibility for the line rental.
19. A Lifeline system will require a smoke alarm linked to the Contact Centre. Should residents opt not to have a Lifeline system there will be a hardwired alarm but like all mainstream properties it will be an alarm that will sound but will not be linked to a contact centre.

### **Options**

20. 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..

### **Implications**

#### ***Financial***

- 21. There are significant financial implications for expenditure which is in the current budget. To upgrade the alarms through a hardwired system would cost approximately £500,000. To upgrade using Lifeline Alarms will cost in the region of £135,000 based on approximately 80% of sheltered housing residents taking up the offer of a Lifeline system. The cost of subsidising the alarm system in 2016/17 for those on housing benefit will cost the HRA approximately £126,000. This will decrease as the upgrade programme progresses throughout the year.

#### ***Legal***

- 22. The Council's leases state that the landlord must provide an alarm system for the use of a leaseholder but does not stipulate what type of alarm this must be.

#### ***Staffing***

- 23. There are no significant implications

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

- 24. There is a risk that tenants who need an alarm will be unwilling to have one and pay for it. Where the alarm system is not hardwired and the full market charge of Lifeline is levied, the scheme may be a risk of de-designation and thus exposed to the Right to Buy legislation.

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

- 25. None

#### ***Climate Change***

- 26. None

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

- 27. A survey of sheltered housing tenant's preferences has been carried out and reflected in this report. Further consultation will be carried out before the implementation of the decision taken by the Portfolio Holder.

## **Effect on Strategic Aims**

### **Aim 1 - C**

28. We will make sure South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for our residents

**Report Author:** Anita Goddard – Head of Housing and Property Services  
Telephone: (01954) 713040

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## Housing Portfolio Holder – Work Programme

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 March 2016	Housing Strategy 2016- 2021	Non Key		Decision	Julie Fletcher
	Service Plan 2016/17	Non Key		Decision	Stephen Hills
	New build Pipeline update	Non Key		Monitoring	Gill Anderton
	Willingham: Wilford Furlong Project	Non Key		Decision	Stephen Hills
June 2016					

### 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)).

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