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13 March 2018

To: Councillor Lynda Harford, Portfolio Holder

Kevin Cuffley
Jose Hales

Hazel Smith

Scrutiny Monitor
Scrutiny Monitor and Opposition
Spokesman
Opposition Spokesman

Dear Sir / Madam

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S MEETING**, which will be held in **MONKFIELD ROOM, FIRST FLOOR** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **WEDNESDAY, 21 MARCH 2018 at 3.30 p.m.**

Yours faithfully
Beverly Agass
Chief Executive

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

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2. Minutes of Previous Meeting		1 - 4
The Portfolio Holder is asked to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2017 as a correct record.		
3. Review of Sheltered Housing Communal Rooms		5 - 10
4. Sub-Regional Home-Link Allocations and Lettings Policy - Updates and Amendments (Key)		11 - 52
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7. Affordable Homes Service Plan 2017/18 and 2018/19		65 - 90
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9. Tenant Participation Group		
10. Forward Plan		
The Portfolio Holder is invited to identify any items that will 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.

11. Date of next meeting

For the Portfolio Holder to consider future meeting dates.

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

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Agenda Item 2

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Wednesday, 18 October 2017 at 3.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Lynda Harford

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors
and Opposition spokesmen: Kevin Cuffley
Hazel Smith

Also in attendance: Anna Bradnam

Officers:

Stephen Hills Director of Housing
Heather Wood Head of Housing Advice and Options
Julie Fletcher Head of Housing Strategy
Victoria Wallace Democratic Services Officer

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Housing Portfolio Holder signed as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2017.

3. REVIEW OF THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY

The Housing Director presented the report which provided an update on the review of the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) and sought approval of the next steps regarding the operations of the CHIA.

The Portfolio Holder and Members were informed that the Council was having to consider how to continue the service based on the withdrawal of Cambridgeshire County Council's revenue support for the service. Members were informed that the County Council's analysis of the service had been based on incorrect information so officers felt this needed to be revisited, whilst recognising the financial pressures on the County Council. Members were also informed that the Clinical Commissioning Group no longer contributed funding to the service.

The Portfolio Holder felt that this was an essential service and that in order to continue to provide the service, there was no option other than to increase fees. It was noted that even with an increase in fees, charges may still be less than those elsewhere.

The Housing Portfolio Holder:

- a) Approved Option A: to lobby the County Council as part of a collective appeal from the local authorities, to try and negotiate a different settlement.
- b) Recommended Option C to Council: to review the fees charged by the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) with a view that the HIA should be self sustaining. This would require fees to be increased from their current 15% to at least 18%, the exact level of fee to be determined in consultation with the County Council in time for the Council's budget setting meeting in February 2018.

4. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS AND THE JOINT HOUSING ADAPTATIONS AGREEMENT

The Head of Housing Strategy presented the report which provided an update regarding the county wide review of disabled facilities grants and sought approval of the joint Housing Adaptation Agreement proposed by Cambridgeshire County Council.

Members were informed that:

- The maximum disabled facilities grant was £30,000 which in a minority of cases may not cover the full cost of the adaptation. Top-up funding was therefore required. Generally, top-up funding had been secured through working with charitable organisations and in one instance, crowd funding had been successful. As a last resort, the County Council had been able to step in to help with the top-up funding required. As the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation from the Better Care Fund to district councils had increased, the County Council was asking district councils to provide top-up funding rather than the County Council. Therefore the Portfolio Holder's agreement was being sought to enable the Council to provide top-up funding if funding was available. A county wide review was underway to look at existing policies, with a view to implementing a county wide Joint Adaptations Policy in 2018, setting out how the Disabled Facilities Grant could be spent. This would provide consistency across the county and make the process for disabled facilities grants more streamlined.
- Council and housing association properties with adaptations, were re-let where possible to those in need of an adapted property. Members were informed that these properties were assigned a mobility code to enable the allocation of suitable homes to individuals.

The Portfolio Holder:

- a) Approved the Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement that provides a framework from which the districts will work towards developing a Joint Adaptations Policy (Option A).
- b) Approved as an interim before the Joint Policy is agreed, the flexibility within the Council's existing policies to provide for 'top up' funding where necessary and subject to available funding (Option B).

5. AFFORDABLE HOMES SERVICE PLAN 2018/19

The Housing Director presented the revised Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2018/19.

The Interim Assistant Director of Housing explained the implications to the Council of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which would lead to significant requirements of the service in order to be legally compliant. Modelling had been carried out and according to this, it was anticipated that a 60% increase in staff may be needed. There would be sanctions if the Council did not comply with the new regulations. A draft response to the consultation on Code of Guidance would be prepared and the input from the Housing Portfolio Holder would be sought. A member briefing on the Homelessness Reduction Act would be held on 15th January 2018. To date, the Council had met all its homelessness prevention duties. The homelessness prevention service was being as cost efficient as possible and where shared projects existed (such as the Homelessness Trailblazer bid), shared posts were in place to carry out this work. However the majority of the work undertaken was case work, which was carried out most effectively at district level.

In response to a query regarding the work of the Council in relation to gypsies and travellers, members were informed that a gypsies and travellers officer was in post within

the Housing Department. The implications of the change in definition of gypsies and travellers in planning policy terms and the findings of the recent survey, were currently being considered as part of the Local Plan examination. The results of this were expected shortly.

In response to a query regarding retirement villages and the provision of council housing for older people in new communities, members were advised that the Housing Strategy would address this and that recommendations of the Council's task and finish group looking at social isolation, had been presented to the Local Health Partnership. The Housing Director continued to work with County Council officers to develop a county wide older people's housing strategy and a draft was being reviewed of work on the modelling of future housing need for older people. This looked at how aspirations had changed.

The Housing Portfolio Holder endorsed the actions identified in the Affordable Homes Draft Service Plan 2018/19.

6. TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP

There was no update from the Tenant Participation Group.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 21st March 2018 at 3.30pm.

The Meeting ended at 4.50pm

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Agenda Item 3



REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder
LEAD OFFICER: Stephen Hills

21 March 2018

Review of Sheltered Housing Communal Rooms

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to detail the work undertaken to date to prepare for the review of the Councils sheltered housing communal facilities known as communal rooms to be taken forward to encompass all 41 facilities.
2. This is not a key decision but has been brought before the Housing Portfolio Holder to update on the progress so far with regards to the communal room review and to approve the next steps of the project.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder:
 - a) approves the project, the projected expenditure, the work undertaken to date and agrees to the project being rolled out in accordance with the draft programme which is estimated to be completed within a two year timescale
 - b) agrees to a proposed allocation of £205,000 to be vired from the existing capital budget and recouped from realised increased revenue and capital receipts
 - c) agrees to the proposed dedicated staffing resource to assist in managing and taking forward the project
 - d) agrees that a Deed of Variation should be included in all future leases of equity share properties to ensure that leaseholders are not in a position to block any change of use proposed for communal rooms on the sheltered housing scheme where they reside.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The desire to undertake a thorough review of the facilities has been driven by many factors which have been a cause for concern. The concerns are primarily;
 - Use of the rooms both by residents and external agencies varies over the district from well used to unused.
 - The rooms are dated and many have not been upgraded therefore any work or replacements are taken on a responsive basis. A timely example is the need to upgrade a large number of cookers as they are likely to be condemned in the near future as they do not meet current safety regulations.
 - Resident's service charges pay for the upkeep and heating of the rooms which if unused gives rise to complaints.

- The Tenants Scrutiny Panel has undertaken a review of communal rooms resulting in a number of recommendations which have been accepted by the Council.
 - Arising from the review it is anticipated that there will be increased rental income and possible capital receipts that will allow the remaining rooms to be invested in to bring them up to a standard expected in a community facility.
5. To do nothing will lead to further deterioration of some rooms, a continued waste of energy heating unused assets, a wasted opportunity of the potential to realise income or a capital receipt for the HRA and provide a facility that is fit for purpose by current standards.

Background

6. There are 44 sheltered schemes throughout the district with 41 having a communal room facility associated with them. The facilities known as communal rooms vary significantly in size but mostly they have furnished lounge rooms, a kitchen facility (some of commercial size), toilets and laundry rooms. Some have unused facilities comprising of limited office space, guest rooms and assisted bathing capability. The office space is unused due to business rates being applied, most are now empty and some are being used for storage. The use of the guest rooms is infrequent and some of the assisted bathing facilities have been capped due to risks associated with legionella.
7. The rooms are paid for through service charges which are a significant source of challenge, particularly from leaseholders, who understandably complain that they are paying for a facility that is largely unused. The most commonly used aspect of many rooms is the laundry facility.
8. The communal rooms represent an HRA asset that in some case could yield an income or a capital receipt but are also a community resource that is not always fully utilised.
9. As a community asset they could have a positive impact on many community concerns such as loneliness, a lack of community facilities in villages and the fact that they range from unused to busy but not utilised to their full potential.
10. The rooms, in some cases, have not been refurbished resulting in many being uninviting and poorly furnished. Any refurbishment will impact on tenants and leaseholders service charges which has been the main cause for a historical lack of planned improvements.
11. The Council has reviewed, in the past, the payment for the use of facilities by groups and individuals, such as day care facilities, lunch clubs, whist clubs, chiropodists and hairdressers. It also considered use by persons other than residents.
12. The result of the review was a charging system which has been implemented. It is not however administered on a consistent basis as it is quite labour intensive to “police” all events and charge accordingly. The charging system was not welcomed by all resulting in some individuals, such as hairdressers, taking their business from the rooms into resident’s houses.

13. The Tenants Scrutiny Panel has undertaken a review of both sheltered housing and communal rooms resulting in recommendations largely accepted by the Council. The main recommendation coming forth was the charging system. This review accepts this, however, as it is very wide in scope it is intended that this recommendation is considered after the review of all rooms has been undertaken.
14. The review of the communal rooms is proposed as a project for the Housing Service Plan 2018/19. Ground work has commenced to launch the project. To date the work has included;
 - Preliminary scoping and completion of a Project Implementation Document (PID).
 - Setting up a project team comprising of staff, elected members and resident representatives.
 - Undertaken a pilot review of two rooms based in Fulbourn (Hollmans Close/St Vigors and Chaplin's Close). This has as yet to be concluded.
 - Established a consultation process involving standard letters, surveys, drop in sessions and follow up telephone calls to ensure all residents and as far as practicable all known stakeholders can give their view.
 - Established a second stage follow up process of letters outlining the result of the initial consultation and follow up consultation with any schemes affected by change.
 - Identified the need for a resource of a member of staff one day per week to work on taking forward the project as feasibility studies, legal and procurement advice, PID management and reports on recommendations for each scheme will be required. The expense of the resource is available from existing budgets.
 - Commissioned a feasibility assessment of one communal room to convert it back to being used as a residential bungalow within the scheme.

Considerations

15. In undertaking the review the main outcomes for recommendations shall be one:
 - retain as a communal room and identify a package of property and service improvements to support the use of the facility
 - retain forming a community resource in partnership with the community or other agencies
 - closure as a communal room and a different use agreed by the Council
 - sale or leasing of the communal room
16. The decision on the recommendations of each review will be authorised by the Housing Portfolio Holder.
17. Whilst a mechanism for full consultation has been established it is anticipated that there will be some residents unhappy with the resulting proposal for the scheme. It is recognised that this could result in adverse publicity therefore the Communications Team have been briefed on the communications being sent out and kept informed of progress.

18. It is also recognised that there may be some unintended consequences of decisions taken such as increased loneliness and isolation. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that there are accessible facilities nearby for affected residents this may not always be possible, therefore the Sheltered Estates Officer for that scheme will undertake to support residents to access services or other facilities. An example would be introducing residents to other communal rooms to ensure they are welcomed.
19. Nearly every scheme has at least one equity share leaseholder on the scheme. Not all leases are the same therefore they will need to be checked on a scheme by scheme basis for the clause on the lease that refers to the use of a communal facility. In order to change the use of a facility all leaseholders on the scheme need to agree to a Deed of Variation. If they do not it will not be possible to make any changes.
20. In order to overcome potential barriers to change it is intended that all future leases whether they are the ones that the Council is legally obliged to buy back (leases completed pre-2007) and those that are sold on the open market will be accompanied with the deed of variation to ensure that even if proposed changes of use of a communal room are blocked at a point in time they can be resumed when the lease changes when it is ultimately sold.
21. The charging for the rooms will be reviewed at the end of the project although work will be done to inform the matter as the project progresses. This will include consideration particularly for communal rooms that are retained and those that are leased out.
22. The project is proposed to span over two years. It is planned to carry out consultation firstly where there are more than one facility in one village or a confined cluster of villages such as Histon and Impington and where there are known issues with particular rooms.
23. The two rooms identified for the next review has commenced; they are The Limes, Bassingbourne and Knutsford Close, Bassingbourne. The reason for this is that the heating system in The Limes is old and liable to complete breakdown which will require a significant capital investment to renew. It is also the only scheme that has oil heating.
24. The next planned room that will be reviewed is The Close at Papworth Everard. This is known to be a room that is not used and the project team wish to use this review to further develop the communications used for this scenario.
25. For those schemes where it is recommended that the communal room should remain, consideration needs to be given to setting up a community chest to invest in the rooms. This could be tenant led. A separate report will be brought back to the Housing portfolio Holder once the details of this proposal have been developed.
26. To ensure that the schemes remain as sheltered housing the provision of the services of a Sheltered Estates Officer will be maintained as well as the provision of alarm service and grounds maintenance. It should be noted that the Council already has sheltered schemes that do not have communal facilities attached to them where residents are encouraged and do access other nearby communal facilities. Every effort will be made to connect residents where the communal room is changed from its existing use to another one nearby or alternative community facility.

Options

27. The Housing Portfolio Holder may:
- a) approve the project, the projected expenditure, the work undertaken to date and agrees to the project being rolled out in accordance with the draft programme which is estimated to be completed within a two year timescale
 - b) agree to a proposed allocation of £205,000 to be vired from the existing capital budget and recouped from realised increased revenue and capital receipts
 - c) agree to the proposed dedicated staffing resource to assist in managing and taking forward the project
 - d) agree that a Deed of Variation should be included in all future leases of equity share properties to ensure that leaseholders are not in a position to block any change of use proposed for communal rooms on the sheltered housing scheme where they reside.
28. Alternatively, the Portfolio Holder could request that further work is undertaken to extend the pilot pending the outcome of the identified reviews and bring a revised report back for consideration at a future Portfolio Holder meeting.

Implications

Financial

29. There are financial implications that have been referred to in the report. The review will incur staffing and professional service costs. These staffing costs have already been agreed within the current financial budget and the cost of professional fees can be met within the current financial budget. The estimated professional fees per review are anticipated to be around £5000. This professional support will therefore be engaged using the Council's procurement processes.

Legal

30. Legal support is required to advise on equity share holder leases, their associated issues and to draft a Deed of Variation.
31. Advice may be necessary as regards the Government's new funding arrangements for supported housing as this will affect sheltered housing and may have an impact on this review. The new funding regime refers to special rents for sheltered housing but the detail has not yet been published.

Staffing

32. The staffing requirements besides the project team are considered to be one day per week. HR advice will be sought on the employment of one member of staff by offering it as a secondment opportunity for existing part time members of staff who wish to increase their hours should the recommendations in this report be agreed to.

Risk Management

33. There is a risk that the project will attract adverse publicity and possibly legal challenge from leaseholders. By proactive dialogue and advice from the Communications Team and 3C Legal Services this risk will be minimised.

34. There is a risk of unintended consequences such as increased loneliness and isolation. This will be minimised by focussing the resources of the Sheltered Estates Officers to support and sign post those affected to ensure that this risk is minimised.

Equality and Diversity

35. The project will impact directly on older residents in sheltered housing. Every opportunity is being taken to consult with all residents on the scheme and a full impact assessment will be carried out on the proposal for each communal room.

Climate Change

36. This is minimal however the Council will avoid using energy through heating unused facilities.

Consultation responses

37. The Tenant Scrutiny Review of Communal Rooms has helped to shape the pilot project.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 1 – Living Well

38. Support our residents to stay in good health as they grow older with access to the services they need.

Aim 4 – An Innovative and Dynamic Organisation

39. Develop strategies for the Council to take advantage of commercial and investment opportunities as they arise.

Background Papers

Tenant led Scrutiny of Sheltered Communal Rooms, Housing Portfolio Holder,
13/9/17

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



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

21 March 2018

Sub-Regional Home-link Allocations and Lettings Policy – Updates and Amendments

Purpose

1. To advise the Housing Portfolio Holder of the recommended updates and amendments to the Sub-Regional Home-link Policy in order to ensure immediate compliance with the Homeless Reduction Act and the General Data Protection Regulations which come into force in April 2018 and May 2018 respectively.
2. This is a key decision because it is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder approves the amendments to the Home-Link Allocations and Lettings Policy (**Appendix A**).

Reasons for Recommendations

4. Without the amendments the Lettings Policy would not be legally compliant in respect of the two new pieces of legislation outlined above. Specialist legal advice has been sought as to how best to ensure compliance without unduly changing the ethos of the policy or the way in which applicants are assessed and prioritised.
5. It is recognised that the ethos to homelessness and homeless prevention work outlined in the Homeless Reduction Act may require a more wholesale review of the Lettings Policy at a later date. The Sub-Regional Home-link partners have agreed to postpone this work for approximately six months in order to better understand the impact of the Act in general and also specifically to gauge the effect on housing allocations across the sub-region. Any subsequent change will be reported back to the Portfolio Holder.
6. The amendments have been agreed by the cross council Home-Link Management Board (March 2018).

Background

7. The Homeless Reduction Act will come into force from 3rd April 2018 and will fundamentally change the way in which local authorities assess and manage homelessness. In particular there is an increased emphasis on preventing homelessness, including the introduction of new statutory prevention duties.
8. The new homelessness legislation is linked closely to the Allocations Policy because it is important that any new duties are reflected in the policy and given the correct priority banding.

Considerations

9. To accommodate the prevention emphasis, some authorities have already made significant alterations to the priority bands in their allocation schemes and have made the prevention status a higher priority band than the current priority given to households who are owed the main housing duty.
10. At this stage the sub-regional partners have agreed not to amend the policy to this extent, preferring to wait until the relatively unknown impact of the new legislation is better understood, including any varying impacts in different parts of the sub-region.
11. However, some relatively minor amendments are still required to ensure that the new homeless duties are properly reflected as well as any immediate changes required to ensure compliance with the changes in data protection requirements.
12. The amendments to the Lettings Policy the Portfolio Holder is asked to consider predominantly relate to Chapters 4 and 8 and can be summarised as follows;
13. The changes pertaining to the Homeless Reduction Act are mainly contained in Chapter 4 and relate to the way in which an applicant's priority relates to the duties and processes set out in the act:
 - Section 4.6 (Band A Applicants) contains wording changes to reflect the new wording and numbering of the main housing duty.
 - Section 4.7 (Band B Applicants) sets out the circumstances in which applicants owed the new prevention duty will be prioritised as different stages of their assessment.
 - Section 4.8 (Band C Applicants) explains the new circumstances which give rise to the category of 'other homeless'.
 - In addition there are some general changes to wording in relation to the medical priority categories in order to better explain that the assessment is based on the impact that a change in an applicant's housing circumstances will have in relation to their health.
14. Chapter 8 ensures the wording of the policy is compliant with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations.

Options

15. The Housing Portfolio Holder has two options:
 - A. Approve the amendments to the Home-Link Allocations and Lettings Policy (**Appendix A**).
 - B. Request that further work is undertaken before a decision is taken.
16. Option B is not recommended as it would leave the Council misaligned with forthcoming national legislation and out of step with its partner councils in Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk.

Implications

17. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, there are no issues to note apart from legal.

Legal

18. If approval is not obtained, the existing Lettings Policy will not reflect current legal advice.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

19. Consultation has taken place between Sub-Regional partners in respect of the relatively minor amendments set out in this paper. A full public consultation exercise will be required when the policy is reviewed more fully in 2018/19 once the impact of the Homeless Reduction Act is better known. In addition, the 3C Legal team and the West –Suffolk Legal Team have had site of the proposed changes and have suggested amendments where appropriate that have already been incorporated. Specialist housing advice was sought from Andy Gale, an established Homeless Prevention Consultant, in relation to the interrelation between the Lettings Policy and the requirements of the Homeless Reduction Act.

Effect on Strategic Aims

(A) HOMES FOR OUR FUTURE - Secure the delivery of a wide range of housing to meet the needs of existing and future communities

(2) Provide a robust policy framework for the creation of strong and well-planned communities, protecting the environment and providing the required housing, infrastructure and amenities

(4) Build more affordable homes, tackle homelessness and manage the impacts of welfare reform on our vulnerable residents

Background Papers

DCLG, Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities DRAFT – published October 2017

Report Author: Heather Wood, Head of Housing Advice and Options (Job-share)
Telephone: (01954) 713044

Appendix A Homelink Lettings Policy

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South Cambridgeshire District Council

LETTINGS POLICY TEMPLATE

This document sets out how South Cambridgeshire District Council, in partnership with Registered Providers with properties in the district, will allocate their properties through the “Home-Link scheme”

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is the letting policy for South Cambridgeshire District Council, (“SCDC”) and should be considered in conjunction with the Home-Link Partnership Guide, which outlines how the Home-Link choice based lettings scheme will work in Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk. The partner organisations to the Home-Link scheme are:

- a) Cambridge City Council
- b) East Cambridgeshire District Council
- c) Fenland District Council
- d) Forest Heath District Council
- e) Huntingdonshire District Council
- f) South Cambridgeshire District Council
- g) St Edmundsbury Borough Council

1.1.2 The Home-Link scheme and this lettings policy were designed through collaboration between the partner organisations listed above, with the aim of having as much consistency in the letting of social housing as is possible in a very diverse area. The lettings policy aims to ensure that all people seeking social housing in South Cambridgeshire District Council can exercise choice in deciding where they wish to live and in the type of property they would prefer.

1.1.3 The policy enables South Cambridgeshire District Council to consider the individual needs of its applicants whilst making best use of the scarce resource of housing stock. The policy sets out:

- a) How to apply for housing.
- b) Who will qualify to be accepted onto the housing register.
- c) How priority for housing applicants will be given.
- d) What the decision-making processes are.
- e) How homes will be let.

1.1.4 You may view the Home-Link Partnership Guide and this lettings policy, at <https://www.scambbs.gov.uk> or request a copy from any of the partner organisation’s offices. (See Appendix 1 on p.31)

1.2 Objectives of the lettings policy

- a) To meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
- b) To assist applicants in the highest assessed need
- c) To let properties in a fair and transparent way and provide a consistent lettings process
- d) To make best use of housing stock
- e) To ensure that applicants are not unlawfully discriminated against, whether directly or indirectly
- f) To support vulnerable applicants
- g) To provide increased choice and information to applicants
- h) To provide information and feedback on homes that are let through the Home-Link scheme
- i) To improve mobility across the Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk
- j) To promote social inclusion and help achieve sustainable communities

1.3 Statement on choice

- 1.3.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council is fully committed to enabling applicants to play a more active role in choosing where they live, whilst continuing to house those in the greatest need in South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- 1.3.2 The Home-Link scheme enables applicants from South Cambridgeshire District Council to have access to a percentage of available homes from all the partner organisations across Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk.

1.4 Legal context

- 1.4.1 All applicants for housing will be assessed to determine their eligibility to be placed on the housing register. This is to ensure homes are let to those in the highest assessed need and ensures that the council meets its legal obligations as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

This policy has also had regard to:

- a) Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England, and
 - b) The Public Sector Equalities Duty, and
 - c) Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, and
 - d) South Cambridgeshire District Council Homelessness Strategy, and
 - e) South Cambridgeshire District Council Tenancy Strategy (containing details of the types of social rented tenancies that may be offered by housing association landlords).
- 1.4.2 The law states that there are five groups of applicants where reasonable preference must be considered:
 - a) People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII (7) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended))
 - b) People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3)
 - c) People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
 - d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability); and
 - e) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)
 - 1.4.3 The lettings policy has been designed to ensure applicants who fall into the above reasonable preference categories will be awarded reasonable preference.
 - 1.4.4 Every application received by South Cambridgeshire District Council will be considered according to the facts unique to that application as South Cambridgeshire District Council recognises that every applicant's situation is different. Applications will be considered on an individual basis and individual circumstances will be taken

into account. However, all lettings will be made in accordance with this lettings policy. Where individual circumstances are not covered by the on-line application form, applicants should contact the partner to whom they are applying to discuss their application so that all relevant facts can be considered fully.

1.5 Equal opportunities and diversity

- 1.5.1 The lettings policy will be responsive, accessible and sensitive to the needs of all by having regard to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

South Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and will ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In addition, South Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011):

- a) Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- b) Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- c) Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

South Cambridgeshire District Council also has due regard to the commitments made in Article 14 of the Human Rights Act (1998) as it relates to the service provided.

1.6 The welfare of children

- 1.6.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council will ensure that decisions made under this lettings policy have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children taking into account Section 11 of The Children's Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 1.6.2 South Cambridgeshire District Council will also have regard to the Children & Social Work Act 2017 as relates to the local arrangements for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children.

1.7 The welfare of adults

- 1.7.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council will also have regard to the Care Act 2014, which includes provisions for adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

1.8 Monitoring and reviewing the lettings policy

- 1.8.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council will monitor the operation of the lettings policy by regularly reviewing the policy to ensure that the policy meets its stated objectives and complies with legislative changes.

Chapter 2

2.1 How to apply for housing

- 2.1.1 As well as applying to go on the housing register, applicants are given the opportunity to complete an on-line housing options assessment form. This allows the applicant's housing options to be assessed and determine which options could be the most appropriate. If this includes social housing (which includes Affordable Rents), and the applicant is eligible, they will then need to complete the more detailed housing register application form. Where applicants are unable to use these on-line facilities a paper form will be available on request and Home-Link partners can offer assistance to complete the form.

The on-line forms can be completed at www.home-link.org.uk. A paper form, if required, can be requested from South Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA or any of the partner organisation's offices as detailed in Appendix 1.

- 2.1.2 An applicant may include anyone on their application who may reasonably be expected to live with them as part of their household.
- 2.1.3 Where two applicants wish to have a shared application they will be known as joint applicants. If an applicant lists a partner on his/her application it will be assumed that the partner is a joint applicant unless either party advises the council otherwise. Although adults who are not partners and need more than one bedroom may jointly apply to the register, due to the level of demand for family sized accommodation from family households (by "family" we mean households that have children (under 18) who are dependent on the adult(s)) they will not normally be prioritised for an offer of this size of accommodation ahead of families.
- 2.1.4 On receipt of the application South Cambridgeshire District Council will assess this and may request additional information and supporting evidence so that the applicant's eligibility and housing need can be confirmed. South Cambridgeshire District Council will verify the information provided which may include inviting the applicant for an interview or visiting them at home.
- 2.1.5 Applications will only be accepted onto the register where:
- a) The applicant is eligible for an allocation of social housing (see Chapter 3); and
 - b) The applicant qualifies for an allocation of social housing. (See sections 3.2 to 3.4).
- 2.1.6 After assessment South Cambridgeshire District Council will write to applicants to inform them whether they have been accepted onto the housing register, or give reasons if they have not. Where accepted they will be informed of:
- a) Their unique reference number, which allows them to bid for homes through the Home-Link Scheme
 - b) The housing needs band in which the application has been placed
 - c) The date that the application was placed in the band (the "date in band")
 - d) The size of property for which the applicant is likely to be able to bid

If they have not been accepted onto the housing register the council will set out the reasons for this decision and will provide information about the review process (see Chapter 6).

2.2 Date of registration

2.2.1 The registration date of an application will be the date the on-line housing application form is received electronically, or if a paper application is submitted, the date it is received at the office of South Cambridgeshire District Council, or any of the partner organisations.

2.3 Date in band

2.3.1 The principle of the policy is that normally no applicant should overtake existing applicants in a band. Therefore, applicants will be placed within a band in date order.

a) **New applications:** the date in band will be the same as the applicant's date of registration. Where supporting documents have been requested, not provided within 28 days but still accepted at the discretion of the council, the date in band will be the date the documents were received

b) **Change of circumstances which results in a higher band assessment:** the date in band will be the date the applicant provides evidence of the change of circumstances leading to the award of a higher priority band.

2.3.2 When applicants move down bands due to a change in their circumstances the following applies:

a) **Returning to a band that they were previously placed in:** the date in band reverts to the date that applied when the applicant was previously in that band.

b) **Moving into a lower band they have not previously been placed in:** the date in band will be the date that the application was first placed into a higher band. In most circumstances, this is likely to be their date of registration.

2.4 Armed Forces personnel – date in band.

2.4.1 Additional priority will be awarded to the following categories of people:

- a) serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service
- b) former members of the regular forces
- c) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
- d) existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.

2.4.2 Additional priority will be awarded to the above categories of people by awarding their application the appropriate priority band, as set out in this lettings policy, and

backdating their date in band by the total cumulative period of their length of military service (including where they have made a homeless application). This will have the effect of raising their priority above applicants in similar circumstances who have not undertaken military service.

This additional priority is awarded to meet the expectations set out in the Armed Forces Covenant and national guidance.

- 2.4.3 Current members of the Armed Forces may also request that this additional priority be applied to their housing application six months prior to the date when they are due to leave military service. Appropriate evidence of the end to military service will be required.

2.5 Multiple applications

- 2.5.1 An applicant can have only one active application on the housing register at any time.

2.6 Change of circumstances

- 2.6.1 Where an applicant registered with South Cambridgeshire District Council has a change in their circumstances they must promptly inform South Cambridgeshire District Council. Applicants can complete a change of circumstances on-line at www.home-link.org.uk or obtain a change of circumstances form from any partner organisation, but this must then be sent to the partner organisation who is managing their application. Change of circumstances received by South Cambridgeshire District Council will be assessed based on the new circumstances. Examples of change of circumstances are detailed below, although this list is not exhaustive.

- a) Change of address
- b) People joining or leaving the household
- c) Pregnancy/birth of a child
- d) Relationship breakdown
- e) Change to the medical circumstances of anyone included on the application
- f) Death of a household member
- g) Death of a joint applicant
- h) Change of income and/or capital

2.7 Applicant's consent and declaration

- 2.7.1 When an applicant applies for housing, they will be required to confirm their understanding of, or sign a declaration to confirm that:
- a) The information they have provided is true, accurate and complete.
 - b) They will promptly inform South Cambridgeshire District Council of any change in circumstances.
 - c) They understand that information will be shared with all the partner organisations.
 - d) They consent to South Cambridgeshire District Council making enquiries of any relevant persons to confirm the information on the application form is correct.
 - e) They consent to the release of any relevant information either to South Cambridgeshire District Council held by third parties, or by South Cambridgeshire District Council to third parties.
 - f) The information provided may be used to help in the detection and prevention of fraud.

2.7.2 South Cambridgeshire District Council may take legal action against applicants who withhold or provide false information regarding their housing application. Where an applicant has been let a property as a result of providing false information, their landlord may take court action to obtain possession of the property.

2.8 Data protection

2.8.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council policy on Data Protection is available on request.

2.9 Application review

2.9.1 Every year on the anniversary of an application being received, we will write to the applicant to see if they still wish to be on the housing register and ask them to update their application if there have been any changes to their circumstances. If there is no response within the required time limit, (28 days from the letter/email being sent) the application will be cancelled. We will write to the applicant to notify them of this. If an applicant contacts South Cambridgeshire District Council within 28 days of their application being cancelled and indicates that they still want to be considered for housing, the application will be reinstated from their last applicable date in band (see s.2.3 above).

2.10 Cancelling an application

2.10.1 An application will be cancelled from the housing register in the following circumstances:

- a) At the applicant's request.
- b) If the applicant becomes ineligible for housing (see s.3.2).
- c) If the applicant no longer falls within a qualifying class of applicant (see s.3.3).
- d) When the applicant has been housed through the lettings policy.
- e) When a tenant completes a mutual exchange.
- f) Where an applicant does not maintain their application through the review process, or where they move and do not provide a contact address.
- g) Where the applicant has died.

2.10.2 When an application is cancelled, we will write to the applicant or their representative to notify them. Where an applicant has been highlighted as vulnerable, South Cambridgeshire District Council will contact the applicant to check their circumstances before cancelling the application. Any applicant whose application has been cancelled has the right to ask for a review of the decision, (see Chapter 6).

2.10.3 Where an applicant wishes to re-join the housing register at a later date their new date of registration will be the date they re-apply.

Chapter 3

3.1 Who can be accepted onto the housing register?

- 3.1.1 The Council can allocate housing to anyone who qualifies for an allocation if they are not ineligible under the Housing Act 1996 section 160ZA
- 3.1.2 The Council cannot allocate housing to two or more persons jointly if one of them is ineligible

3.2 Eligible applicants

- 3.2.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council is required, by law, to decide that certain applicants are ineligible for an allocation of social housing. Eligibility can change with a change of immigration status and therefore the Council will keep an applicant's eligibility for housing under review. Applicants are responsible for informing the Council of any change in their immigration status.
- 3.2.2 Applicants whose immigration status makes them ineligible to be considered on the register will be notified in writing of the decision and the reason for the decision. If an applicant is accepted onto the register, but subsequently becomes ineligible, their housing application will be cancelled and the applicant notified. Applicants found to be ineligible have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).
- 3.2.3 Where an eligible applicant includes people who are ineligible as part of his or her household the council can, in deciding who forms part of the applicant's household for the purposes of housing allocation:
 - (a) Have regard to the fact that members of a person's household would not be eligible for accommodation in their own right
 - (b) Have regard to the fact that an ineligible person is not permitted to have recourse to public funds.
 - (c) Conclude that an ineligible person does not form part of the household.

3.3 Qualifying categories of applicants

- 3.3.1 Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk are areas where the demand for social housing far exceeds the supply. For this reason only those applicants who meet the local connection criteria will qualify to join the housing register (see s.3.4).
- 3.3.2 Applicants will not qualify to join the housing register if they are considered to be unsuitable to be a tenant because of unacceptable behaviour (see s.3.5)

3.4 Connection to the local area criteria

- 3.4.1 An applicant will be considered to have a connection with South Cambridgeshire District Council and accepted onto the housing register if they meet one of the following criteria:
 - a. The applicant works in the local authority area for sixteen hours or more per week; or

- b. The applicant has lived in the local authority area for at least 6 of the last 12 months, or 3 of the last 5 years; or
- c. The applicant has family members who have been resident in the local authority area for a period of 5 years or longer and are currently resident in the local authority area. Family members are defined as parents, sons and daughters or brothers or sisters. Other family associations will be considered on a case by case basis; or
- d. The applicant is owed a main housing duty under the s.193 (2) or 193C (4) of the relevant homelessness legislation by South Cambridgeshire District Council; or
- e. The applicant is serving in the regular forces or who has served in the regular forces within five years of the date of their application for an allocation of housing under Part 6 of the 1996 Act; or
- f. The applicant has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner where—
 - i. the spouse or civil partner has served in the regular forces; and
 - ii. their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
- g. The applicant is serving or has served in the reserve forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
- h. The applicant is a "relevant person" as defined by Regulation 4 of the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015; or
- i. The applicant or a member of the applicant's household needs to move away from another area to escape violence or harm; or
- j. The applicant is a care leaver from South Cambridgeshire District Council who has been placed (by Children's Services) outside the South Cambridgeshire District Council area; or
- k. There are special circumstances that South Cambridgeshire District Council considers give rise to a local connection.

3.4.2 Applicants who are in one of the reasonable preference groups, but with none of the connection to the local area criteria above, may be eligible to join the register. Anyone who believes this applies to them should contact (insert local authority name) directly to discuss their circumstances.

3.5 Applicants with a history of unacceptable behaviour

3.5.1 Where an applicant or a member of their household has a history of behaviour which in the opinion of South Cambridgeshire District Council is unacceptable and makes the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant the council may decide that the applicant does not qualify to be accepted onto the housing register. Unacceptable behaviour can include (but is not limited to) domestic or other abuse, harassment, anti-social

behaviour, drug dealing or other criminal activity, failing to maintain or repair their home or associated garden or garage, noise nuisance or tenancy related debt

- 3.5.2 When considering whether an applicant with a history of unacceptable behaviour qualifies to be accepted on the housing register, the council will consider the nature of the behaviour, when it took place, the length of time that has elapsed since and whether there has been any change in circumstances which would show that the applicant or member of the applicant's household had amended their behaviour so that they are considered suitable to become a tenant
- 3.5.3 If the council decides that an applicant does not qualify to be accepted on the housing register because the applicant or a member of their household has a history of unacceptable behaviour that makes them unsuitable to be a tenant, the applicant will be informed in writing of this decision and the reasons for the decision. They will also be informed how they can become a qualifying person, for example, by agreeing an arrangement to make payments towards rent arrears and adhering to this, or by the applicant showing that the circumstances or behaviour that made them unsuitable to be a tenant, has changed
- 3.5.4 If an applicant is accepted onto the register but a change in their behaviour means that they are no longer a qualifying person, their housing application will be removed and the applicant will be notified in writing of this decision and the reasons for the decision
- 3.5.5 Applicants considered as not qualifying due to unacceptable behaviour have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).

3.6 16 and 17 year olds

- 3.6.1 Anyone aged 16 or over can apply for housing. However until the applicant reaches 18 years old any offer of accommodation will be subject to appropriate guarantor or trustee arrangements being in place. The guarantor could be a family member, adult friend, or a professional body. Applicants under 18 years old will be referred to a housing officer for advice regarding their housing rights and options.

Chapter 4

Assessment of housing need

4.1 Legal background

- 4.1.1 All eligible and qualifying applicants will be placed in a housing needs band following an assessment of their household's needs. This is to ensure that South Cambridgeshire District Council meet their legal obligations as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

4.2 Advice and information

- 4.2.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council will ensure that advice and information on how to apply for housing in South Cambridgeshire District Council is available free of charge to everyone. If applicants are likely to have difficulty in making an application without assistance, then the council will make any necessary assistance they require available.

4.3 Assessment of housing need

- 4.3.1 Assessments of housing needs are based on an applicant's current housing circumstances. Assessments will be completed by housing officers of South Cambridgeshire District Council. Medical assessments will be made by a medical professional or appropriately trained officer.

Where an adverse decision about an application is made by any of the Home-Link partners, any duplicate applications to another partner's housing register will have due regard to that original decision. Because the Home-Link partners use the same assessment criteria for housing applications, original decisions will only be overturned in exceptional circumstances following an assessment. The original partner applied to will be contacted to discuss the decision and the decision will generally apply to any new application when sufficient information has been received.

Any new or additional information not available for the original decision will be considered by the Home-Link partner to assess any impact on the decision.

4.4 Local lettings criteria

- 4.4.1 To ensure local housing needs are met, 90% of properties advertised through the Home-Link scheme will be labelled as available to applicants with a connection to South Cambridgeshire District Council. 10% of advertised properties will be open to bidding from applicants with a connection to any of the Home-Link partner organisations. 25% of new growth homes will be made available for cross boundary moves. The relevant local area connection requirement will be clearly labelled on the property advert.
- 4.4.2 Where a property has local area connection criteria attached to it through a local lettings plan or s.106 agreement, then these properties will be let in line with the criteria within the lettings plan or the s.106 agreement. This may differ from the

connection to the local area criteria contained within this lettings policy and will be mentioned in the property advert.

4.5 Housing needs bands

- 4.5.1 Eligible and qualifying applicants will be placed in one of the following four bands in date order. Applicants placed in Band A will have the highest assessed need, Band D the lowest. When an applicant is placed in a housing needs band the same level of priority will apply with all partner organisations in the Home-Link scheme.
- 4.5.2 Any applicants accepted on to the housing register under section 3.4.2 of this policy (in a reasonable preference group but not meeting the connection to the local area criteria), will be placed in band C. However, they will only be considered for a property after any applicants in that band who have a proven connection with the local area.

4.6 Band A: Urgent need

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band A:

a) Urgent transfer

Where an existing council or housing association tenant needs to move urgently because of circumstances that could include:

- a) Major repairs are required on the property in which they live and which cannot be undertaken with the tenant living in the property.
- b) The property is being demolished.
- c) Urgent social need to move.

b) Current supported housing resident

Applicants leaving Social Services care or other supported accommodation, and are ready to move to a permanent home of their own. This will be subject to the council, Social Services and the landlord of the supported accommodation agreeing that the applicant is ready to move to their own home. If the applicant needs an on-going support package to allow them to live independently, confirmation that this will be put in place will also be required from the proposed support provider. The date that this priority is awarded (date in Band A) will be the date that the resident is ready to move to independent living, as recommended by their support worker.

The decision to apply this priority will be made by the relevant decision-making process in the district where the supported housing is based.

c) Urgent health and safety risk

The condition of the applicants current accommodation has been assessed by South Cambridgeshire District Council or a partner organisation as posing an urgent health and safety risk. This will apply where the assessment has classified the accommodation as unsafe, or where there is a risk of imminent harm as identified in the assessment, which cannot be remedied in a reasonable time and where the health and safety risk has not been caused intentionally by the applicant or a member of the applicant's household who will continue to live with them.

d) Urgent medical need

An urgent medical priority will be awarded where the assessment concludes that the applicant or household member has a severe medical condition or disability that is made substantially worse by their current housing. This would include people whose life is at risk due to their current housing conditions or who are completely housebound because of the type of accommodation they live in.

Priority will be given depending on how unsuitable the current accommodation is in relation to their medical or disability needs. The assessment is not purely based on the applicant's health conditions.

The following are only examples of circumstances that **may** qualify (but not in all circumstances) for an urgent medical need award:

- Those who, on leaving hospital, either have nowhere to live or have somewhere to live but it is unsuitable for their medical needs and cannot be made suitable through adaptations
- Those who have somewhere to live but it is unsuitable for their medical needs and cannot be made suitable through adaptations because of cost effectiveness, structural difficulties or the property cannot be adapted within a reasonable amount of time. Applicants will be individually assessed
- Where an applicant's condition is life threatening and the existing accommodation is a major contributory factor
- Where an applicant's health is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening
- Disabled persons (as defined under the Equality Act 2010) who have restricted or limited mobility and are limited by their accommodation and unable to carry out day to day activities or have difficulties accessing facilities e.g. bathroom, kitchen, toilet, inside and outside of their accommodation safely and the current accommodation cannot be reasonably adapted

e) Lacking two or more bedrooms

The household is assessed as lacking two or more bedrooms (see s.5.4).

f) Under-occupancy by two or more bedrooms or release of adapted property

Where an existing council or housing association tenant:

- a) Is assessed as having two or more bedrooms that are not required by the household (see s.5.4).
- b) Where a property has been adapted and the adaptations are no longer required. For example, if the person requiring the adaptations has moved or died.

g) Homeless households (Main homelessness duty owed under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 as amended)

Where South Cambridgeshire District Council has accepted a duty under s193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and this duty has not been brought to an end.

h) Urgent multiple needs

This priority will be applied where an applicant is assessed as having two or more Band B needs. This may include an application where two household members have the same assessed need e.g. two high medical needs.

For multiple needs in Band A please see 'emergency housing status' (see Chapter 5)

4.7 Band B: High need

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band B:

a) High health and safety risk

The condition of the applicant's current accommodation has been assessed by South Cambridgeshire District Council a partner organisation as posing a high health and safety risk to them or members of their household. This will apply where the assessment has identified that the applicant is living in a property, the condition of which places them or members of their household at a high risk of harm as identified in the assessment, which cannot be remedied in a reasonable time and where the health and safety risk has not been caused intentionally by the applicant or a member of the applicant's household who will continue to live with them.

b) High medical need

A high medical priority will be awarded where the assessment concludes that the applicant or household member has a serious medical condition or disability that is made substantially worse by their current housing, but who are not housebound or whose life is not at risk due to their current housing.

However, their housing conditions directly contribute to causing serious ill health and the condition of the property cannot be resolved within a reasonable period of time.

Circumstances will be assessed and may need to be referred to a relevant health care professional, depending upon the circumstances. The following are only examples of cases that **may** qualify (but not in all circumstances) for a high medical need award:

- The applicant's accommodation is directly contributing to the deterioration of the applicant's health, such as severe chest condition, requiring intermittent hospitalisation because of chronic dampness in the accommodation
- Children with severe conditions such as autism, or cerebral palsy, where their long-term needs cannot be met without suitable accommodation
- A member of the household seeking accommodation is disabled and re-housing will enable that person to overcome physical barriers created by current accommodation e.g. steps and stairs
- A person with a severe disability requiring substantial adaptations to a property which is not, and cannot be provided for in their current accommodation
- A person with a terminal illness or long-term debilitating condition whose current accommodation is not having a significant impact on their condition but where their quality of life would be significantly improved by moving to alternative suitable accommodation
- A person suffering with a diagnosed mental illness where the medical condition would be significantly improved by a move to alternative accommodation.

c) Lacking one bedroom

This priority will be applied where the household is assessed as lacking one bedroom based on the bedroom calculation in (see s.5.4).

d) Under-occupancy by one bedroom.

This priority will be applied where an existing council or housing association tenant is assessed as having one bedroom more than required by the household (see s.5.4).

e) Victims of harassment, violence or abuse

Where South Cambridgeshire District Council or a partner organisation has investigated and identified that the applicant or a member of their household is being subjected to harassment or other conduct causing alarm and distress that will be improved by a move to alternative accommodation. Harassment might be, but is not limited to, harassment due to, race, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, mental health, physical disability, learning disability, religion, domestic abuse or harassment by a former partner or associated persons.

South Cambridgeshire District Council will offer advice and support to assist the applicant in identifying possible ways to resolve the situation.

f) Applicants owed a Prevention or Relief duty (under s, 189a or 189B of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended))

Where an applicant is threatened with homelessness within 56 days, South Cambridgeshire District Council, will work with the applicant to try and prevent their homelessness. Those applicants, who the council have reason to believe would be owed the main duty in the event of a homelessness application and a local connection, will be placed in Band B whilst the prevention measures are being pursued and the applicants are actively co-operating with the prevention work being done.

Where homelessness prevention has not been possible and an applicant becomes homeless, they will be owed a relief duty. Those applicants, who the council have reason to believe would be owed the main duty in the event of a homelessness application and a local connection, will remain in Band B during this time.

This priority will no longer apply once the prevention and relief duties have ended and applicants will be re-assessed on their housing circumstances.

g) Sleeping rough

This priority will be applied where it has been confirmed that an applicant is sleeping rough and has no other accommodation available to them. The council will verify that an applicant is sleeping rough before awarding this priority. Rough sleeping priority will not be awarded when accommodation is available to the applicant, including a placement at a direct access hostel, but the applicant chooses not to take up this offer of accommodation. Applicants assessed as 'Sleeping rough' will not be awarded additional priority on any other accommodation related factors.

h) Multiple needs

This priority will be applied where an applicant is assessed as having three or more Band C needs. This may include an application where more than two household members have the same assessed need e.g. three medical needs.

4.8 Band C: Medium need

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band C:

a) Medium medical need

Medium medical need will be awarded where an applicant has a medical condition or disability that is affected significantly by their housing circumstances, not at a critical or serious impact level but a move would be likely to improve their quality of life.

b) Need to move for social reasons

Where South Cambridgeshire District Council or a partner organisation has assessed the applicant's need to move for social reasons. An applicant will only be awarded this factor once irrespective of the number of social needs that may apply to their situation.

Examples where a social need to move may apply may include where an applicant:

- a) Needs to move to or within an area of the sub-region to give or receive support, and a proven level of support is required and can be given
- b) Has found employment in the South Cambridgeshire District Council area and needs to move closer to work, or will otherwise lose their employment, or suffer hardship
- c) Has staying contact with a child/children and is living in accommodation where the child/children are not allowed to stay overnight.
- d) Is living in a first floor or above property and has children less than 10 years of age as part of their household, or is more than 24 weeks pregnant.

c) Housing conditions

This priority will be applied where the applicant/s either lack or share one or more of these facilities with persons, who are not members of their household. Facilities may include:

- a) A living room
- b) Kitchen
- c) Bathroom

d) Other homelessness

Applicants who are:

- a) Owed a s195 prevention duty by the council but have been assessed as not having a local connection as set out in this policy
- b) Owed a s195 prevention or s189 (b) relief duty but where the council believe the applicant would be unlikely to be owed the main s193 (2) housing duty if the relief duty were to come to an end unsuccessfully
- c) No longer owed a prevention or relief duty
- d) Where the relief duty has come to an end unsuccessfully and the applicant has been determined to be intentionally homeless.
- e) Where the relief duty has ended unsuccessfully and it has been determined that the applicant is not owed the main duty as they are not in priority need
- f) Applicants who are owed the s193C (4) duty where the s189B relief duty has been ended due to the applicants deliberate non-cooperation

- g) Owed a main homelessness duty by a local authority that is not a partner organisation in Home-Link scheme but has a local connection as defined in this policy.

Applicants assessed as 'Other homelessness' will not be awarded additional priority on any other accommodation related factors.

Applicants given this priority will have their application reviewed on the anniversary of the decision, unless there is a change in their circumstances in the meantime.

e) Reasonable preference but no connection to the local area

This priority will apply to any applicant in one of the reasonable preference groups but who do not meet any of the criteria for connection to the local area in section 3.4.1 of this policy.

4.9 Band D: Low housing need

- 4.9.1 Any applicant who does not meet any of the criteria in Bands A, B and C will be assessed as having a low level of housing need and their application will be placed in Band D.
- 4.9.2 Anyone assessed as having sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing need (see s.4.13) will be placed in band D. These applicants will only be considered for an offer of a property once all other bidding applicants who do not have sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing need have been considered.

4.10 Low priority

- 4.10.1 In certain circumstances, applicants will be accepted onto the housing register, but their application will be considered as low priority as a result of unacceptable behaviour or circumstances that affects their suitability to be a tenant. In these circumstances their application will be placed in a housing needs band but they will not be actively considered for an offer of a tenancy or be able to express interest in available properties. Their application will remain in low priority until the applicant has shown that the circumstances or behaviour has changed so that they are considered suitable to be a tenant.

- 4.10.2 The following categories will be considered as low priority:

- a. Applicants with recoverable rent arrears, former rent arrears or other housing-related charges or debts, where these are not sufficiently high to class them as not qualifying to join the register (see s.3.5). Other than in exceptional circumstances, an applicant with outstanding recoverable rent arrears, former rent arrears or other housing-related debts will not be considered for an offer of a tenancy or eligible to bid for housing until they have shown a regular repayment record.
- b. Applicants with a history of unacceptable behaviour where this is not sufficiently severe to class them as not qualifying to join the register (see s.3.5).

- 4.10.3 All applicants who are considered low priority will be informed of this decision in writing, and how their application could be re-assessed, for example, by agreeing and keeping to an arrangement to make payments towards rent arrears, or by the applicant satisfying the council that the circumstances or unacceptable behaviour that made them unsuitable to be a tenant have changed.
- 4.10.4 South Cambridgeshire District Council expects applicants to clear any recoverable housing related debts owed to any social housing landlord before an offer of a tenancy is made, where it is clearly within their means to do this (for example where the debt is relatively low and the applicant has a reasonable disposable income or has sufficient savings available).
- 4.10.5 When a financial assessment shows that the debt cannot be cleared immediately then a realistic and affordable repayment arrangement should be agreed to clear the debt. The applicant may become eligible to bid for property as long as they have made regular payments in line with the agreement they have made.
- 4.10.6 Applicants found to be low priority have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).

4.11 Intentionally worsening housing circumstances

- 4.11.1 If an applicant is assessed as having intentionally worsened their circumstances, the effect of which would be to improve their housing priority irrespective of whether they had prior knowledge of the lettings policy, their level of housing need will be assessed on the basis of their previous accommodation, or previous circumstances at their current accommodation.
- 4.11.2 Applicants found to have intentionally worsened their circumstances have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).
- 4.11.3 All applicants deemed to have intentionally worsened their circumstances will have their application reviewed on the anniversary of the decision, or earlier if there is a material change in their circumstances in the meantime.
- 4.11.4 If South Cambridgeshire District Council has assessed and accepted the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, has a priority need under the homeless legislation, but considers that they have become homeless intentionally; the applicant will be placed in Band C.

4.12 Homeowners

- 4.12.1 In line with the 'Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England', South Cambridgeshire District Council will usually only allocate social housing to homeowners in exceptional circumstances. However, the council may allocate housing that is in low demand. Applicants who are homeowners will be allocated a Band D status. In exceptional circumstances South Cambridgeshire District Council may consider a homeowner's status for example the council may allocate housing to applicants who require support and whose age qualifies them for housing for older people but who have insufficient financial resources to access housing for older people in the private sector

4.13 Financial resources

- 4.13.1 All qualifying applicants are entitled to apply for housing regardless of income levels. However, if an applicant is assessed as having income and/or capital, which will enable them to resolve their own housing need through other tenures they will not receive any preference for social housing and when bidding will appear on the shortlist after all other applicants that do not have the resources to resolve their own need.

This assessment will be based on the following

- a) The total income of the applicant/partner
 - b) Any capital available to the applicant/partner
 - c) Average property prices and rents in the area for the type of accommodation needed by the household
 - d) The ability of the applicant/partner to rent a property in the private sector based on a realistic assessment of their financial position and commitments.
 - e) The ability of the applicant/partner to acquire a mortgage and maintain required repayments based on a realistic assessment of their financial position and commitments.
- 4.13.2 Excluded from the above financial assessment will be any member of the Armed Forces who may have received a lump sum as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.

4.13 Officer review for Band A applicants

- 4.13.1 Where an applicant has held Band A status for three months or more from their applicable date in band or the applicant has refused more than three reasonable offers of accommodation or has made little or no attempt to bid for accommodation South Cambridgeshire District Council may carry out a review of their circumstances. This will result in either:
- a) A direct let – usually for statutorily homeless applicants living in temporary accommodation.
 - b) Priority being maintained.
 - c) Moving into a lower priority band if the circumstances under which they were placed in Band A no longer apply.
 - d) Making the applicant unable to bid for a specified period, not exceeding 6 months

Chapter 5

Assessment information and criteria

5.1 Transfer applicants

- 5.1.1 Transfer applicants are those applicants who are tenants of a council or housing association property in the UK who wish to move to alternative accommodation.

5.2 Homeless applications

- 5.2.1 Applicants who are already on the housing register will remain in their existing housing needs band whilst a homeless assessment is carried out (unless the criterion in s.5.2.3 below applies).
- 5.2.2 When a decision has been made by South Cambridgeshire District Council that an applicant is owed a main homelessness duty under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) their application will be placed and remain in Band A until that duty is brought to an end (See s.4.6 (g))
- 5.2.3 A person who is threatened with homelessness may have an existing housing register application. Applicants already in Band A will retain their existing Band A status whilst homelessness prevention measures are pursued.
- 5.2.4 An applicant who is statutorily homeless or threatened with homelessness but deemed not to have a priority need will be placed in Band C (unless other circumstances are such that they are eligible for placement within a different band).
- 5.2.5 Applicants who have been assessed as being in priority need but are intentionally homeless will be assessed as having Band C status in line with 4.8(d). If an applicant has intentionally worsened their circumstances the housing needs assessment will take this into account (see s.4.11).

5.3 Split families

- 5.3.1 Where an application is made by family members who it would be reasonable to expect them to live together but they are unable to do so, the council will assess their particular circumstances to consider the best way of addressing their housing needs.

5.4 Bedroom requirement guidelines

- 5.4.1 Bedroom requirements are generally determined in line with the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) regulations and these regulations will be applied when calculating bedroom requirements in overcrowding and under-occupancy assessments. They will also be used when calculating the size of property (number of bedrooms in the property) that an applicant will be able to bid on and eligible to be offered through the letting process.

Bedroom requirements are determined by the applicant's size of household. Ineligible household members may not be included (see paragraph 3.2.3). Generally, the LHA regulations allow one bedroom each for:

- a) Every adult couple
- b) Any other adult aged 16 or over
- c) Any two children (aged under 16) of the same sex
- d) Any two children, regardless of sex, under the age of 10

- e) Any other child aged under 16
- f) A non-resident carer (claimant/partner or child have disability and need overnight care)

Applicants requiring help in calculating their bedroom entitlement can use the Directgov online bedroom entitlement calculator at <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/BedRoomCalculator.aspx>.

If, in exceptional circumstances, the council considers that a room designated by a landlord as a bedroom is not capable of being used as a bedroom, they may re-assess overcrowding for the household.

- 5.4.2 Single and joint applicants of pensionable age may be eligible to be considered for one and two bedroom properties considered to be housing for older people.
- 5.4.3 A pregnant woman expecting her first child will be assessed as requiring two bedrooms from week 24 of her pregnancy.
- 5.4.4 An applicant may be assessed as requiring an additional bedroom where South Cambridgeshire District Council considers there are special circumstances.

5.5 Staying contact with children

- 5.5.1 A child, or children, living between parents at separate addresses will only be considered as having one main home unless there are exceptional circumstances that mean that both parents should provide a home. A Court Order allowing access to children, or confirming residence between separated parents does not mean that the council must consider that the child is part of an applicant's household for the purposes of a housing register application.
- 5.5.2 An assessment will be made by the council as to which parent's property is considered as the child's main home. If the council considers that an applicant does not provide the child with his or her main home then the child will not be considered as part of the housing register application. The child would then not be considered as part of the bedroom requirements when assessing overcrowding or under-occupation. They would also not be considered when assessing the size of property (number of bedrooms) that the application would be eligible to bid for and offered through the lettings process.

5.6 Medical assessments

- 5.6.1 Medical assessments will be carried out for any applicants who believe that their medical condition or disability is affected by their current accommodation. The applicant will be required to fill in a self-assessment medical form, or provide information from a medical professional, detailing the effect that their current accommodation has on their medical condition or disability. These forms will be assessed and where appropriate referred to a medical professional or appropriately trained officer for their opinion of how the medical condition is affected by the applicant's housing circumstances.

5.7 Harassment and domestic violence

- 5.7.1 Where the applicant is a victim of harassment, domestic violence or anti-social behaviour, South Cambridgeshire District Council will offer advice and support to assist applicants in identifying possible ways of resolving their situation.

5.8 Applicant subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements, (MAPPA)

5.8.1 Where an applicant is subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), South Cambridgeshire District Council will liaise with the panel to ensure an appropriate housing solution to meet the needs of the applicant and the community.

5.9 Emergency housing status

5.9.1 An emergency housing status may be awarded to applicants in exceptional circumstances, where remaining in their current accommodation may cause risk of death or serious injury, where an applicant has been assessed as having multiple needs that fall within Band A, where an applicant is terminally ill, is already in Band A and, in the opinion of a qualified medical practitioner, is likely to have less than 12 months to live, or where the applicant's home is to be demolished under one of the council's or partner organisation's redevelopment schemes. An applicant with emergency housing status who bids for a home will be considered as a priority above all other applicants in any other band.

5.10 Direct Lets

5.10.1 Most properties will be advertised through the Home-Link scheme. However in certain circumstances some properties may be let directly to applicants and these properties will be let outside of the allocation scheme. Where an applicant is identified as requiring a direct let the case will be referred to a senior officer for approval. The list below gives some examples of where this may happen.

- a) Where the council has accepted a main homelessness duty towards a household but the household has not found suitable accommodation during a period of choice through the Home-Link scheme.
- b) Where the council has accepted a s189 (b) relief duty towards a household but the household has not found suitable accommodation during a period of choice through the Home-Link scheme.
- c) Where an applicant and their household require a specific size, type or adapted property and the applicant has not been able to find suitable accommodation through the Home-Link scheme
- d) Where an existing social housing tenant is required to move to make the best use of stock, including where their home is to be demolished, and they have not been successful in finding a suitable property through the Home-Link scheme
- e) Where the applicant has emergency housing status
- f) Use and occupation cases
- g) Where an applicant in Band A has refused 3 reasonable offers or made little or no effort to bid

5.10.2 Information as to which properties have been allocated though direct lets will be made available through the Home-Link feedback information.

5.10.3 Direct lets will be made based on a suitable property becoming available. Where a property becomes available that is suitable for more than one applicant with a direct let status, the date applicants were awarded a direct let status will be used as a deciding factor in deciding to whom the property will be let.

5.11 Direct lets to homeless applicants

5.11.1 Homeless applicants who are owed a main homelessness duty by South Cambridgeshire District Council (under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)) will be placed in Band A and will be able to bid for properties through the Home-Link scheme. Their date in band will be the date they originally applied to the council as homeless.

5.11.2 Where homeless applicants in Band A have not been have not been offered a tenancy through the bidding process at the point at which the Council has accepted the main homelessness duty, the council reserves the right to make a direct let of a property, either in the social or private rented sector, under the council's policy on discharging homelessness duties.

5.11.3 The main homelessness duty will come to an end, and a homeless applicant loses their priority under this section, when any of the circumstances within s.193 (6) or (7) of the Housing Act 1996 Act (as amended) are met. This will include an applicant:

- a) Accepting an offer of accommodation made through the Home-Link scheme
- b) Accepting an offer made through the direct let process within the policy (see s.5.10 above), or
- c) Accepting a suitable offer of accommodation in the private rented sector in line with section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012
- d) Having been informed of the possible consequences of refusal and the right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation, refuses a reasonable offer of suitable accommodation made through the direct let process, or in the private rented sector as outlined in c) above

S. 193(6) of the Housing Act 1996 Act (as amended) gives the full circumstances under which the main homelessness duty comes to an end.

5.11.4 Where a homeless applicant is to be allocated a property through the direct let process South Cambridgeshire District Council has responsibility for determining the suitability of any allocation. They will do this by assessing the household's particular needs and circumstances within the context of the general housing conditions in the area.

5.11.5 Where a homeless applicant is offered accommodation through a direct let, but does not feel that this offer is suitable; they have the right to request a review of the decision that the offer is suitable. For details of the review process (see Chapter 6).

5.11.6 As the property does not have to remain available during the review of the suitability and reasonableness of a direct let, homeless applicants are advised to accept and move in to the accommodation pending the decision on review. If the review outcome is unsuccessful for the applicant they will still have accommodation to live in whilst they consider their further options.

5.11.7 If a homeless applicant refuses a direct let and it is then deemed suitable at review, the main homelessness duty will come to an end. They will also have to vacate any temporary accommodation that is being provided.

5.11.8 If, on reviewing an applicant's refusal of a direct let, the property offered is considered to be unreasonable or unsuitable, the duty under s.193 (2) will continue and the applicant will be made a further offer of suitable accommodation.

5.12 Applicants who require a specific size, type or adapted property.

5.12.1 Where an applicant requires a specific size, type or adapted property, they will be placed in the appropriate housing needs band, but may be offered a direct let if South Cambridgeshire District Council have a shortage of suitable properties. For example:

- a) An applicant requires a very large property to accommodate their household.
- b) An applicant requires a property of a specific type in a specific area of the district.
- c) An applicant requires a property with specific adaptations and such a property becomes available.
- d) Where an applicant is willing to move to release a property larger than required to meet their housing needs.

5.13 Housing for older people (also known as sheltered housing)

5.13.1 Housing for older people will be advertised through the Home-Link scheme. Housing for older people is generally available to applicants over 60 years of age but the age limit can be lower on some properties and it will be clearly shown in the advert. Prior to an offer of a tenancy, applicants will be subject to an assessment by the landlord of the property to establish their support needs and suitability to living in housing for older people.

5.14 Extra care properties

5.14.1 Extra care properties are for older people who need the additional support services that are provided. Extra care properties are not often advertised through Home-Link. Where they are advertised, applicants who bid will be assessed based on their care needs by a specialist panel.

5.15 Refusals of direct let

5.15.1 Where an applicant (other than a person owed the main homelessness duty) refuses a reasonable offer of a direct let a senior officer will review the reasons for the refusal and the applicant may lose any housing priority they held, dependent on the reasons for the offer refusal. Applicants have the right to ask for a review of this decision (see Chapter 6).

5.16 Local lettings plans

5.16.1 Local lettings plans are used across the Home-Link area to help create balanced and sustainable communities. Where a local lettings plan applies, it will be stated in the property details when advertised. Details of any local lettings plans will be available from the local authority in whose area the property is situated. Some local lettings plans may ask for an applicant to have a local connection to a specific parish or village. In those cases, the connection criteria will be stipulated in the legal agreement for that development.

Chapter 6

6.1 Reviews of decisions

6.1.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council will carry out reviews of assessment decisions as required.

6.1.2 Examples of circumstances that may be reviewed include:

- a) Multiple need in band
- b) Emergency housing status
- c) Moving people up a band or down a band
- d) Priority assessments, in complex cases.
- e) Housing people in different accommodation to designated need size
- f) Low priority decisions
- g) Direct lets
- h) Being restricted from bidding

The above list is not exhaustive.

6.2 Statutory reviews

6.2.1 An applicant has the right to request a review of certain decisions made under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). These are:

- a) Decisions about the facts of the applicant's case which are likely to be, or have been, taken into account in considering whether to accept onto the housing register or to allocate housing accommodation to the applicant
- b) Lack of any reasonable preference based on previous behaviour s167 (2C) Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
- c) Ineligibility for an allocation based on immigration status s160ZA (9)
- d) Decisions that an applicant does not qualify for entry on to the housing register (see sections 3.3 to 3.5)

6.2.2 Decision letters issued in respect of housing applications will advise the applicant of their right to request a review and provide appropriate guidance on how to do this. An applicant can obtain further details of the review procedure from South Cambridgeshire District Council.

6.2.3 A request for a review of a decision can be made in writing or verbally to a member of staff at South Cambridgeshire District Council. The request should be made within 21 days following the notification of the decision. Reviews will normally be considered within 56 days of the request being received but may be completed sooner. The applicant will receive a written response outlining the result of the review.

6.2.4 An applicant will only be entitled to one internal review. If an applicant is still unhappy following the review of a decision, they can make a complaint through the council's complaints procedures. If they continue to be dissatisfied after the council complaints procedure is concluded, they can contact the Local Government Ombudsman (see s.6.4) or seek to challenge the decision through a judicial review.

6.2.5 Statutory reviews will be undertaken by a designated officer who was not involved in the original decision, and who is senior to the original decision-making officer.

6.3 Homeless reviews

- 6.3.1 Homeless applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by South Cambridgeshire District Council in respect of their homeless application. Within the context of the council's lettings policy this includes the decision to bring to an end the main homelessness duty by making a suitable offer of permanent accommodation through the housing register through the direct let process or in the private rented sector (see s.5.11).
- 6.3.2 If an applicant wishes to ask for the review of the Council's decision following a homeless application they must request this within 21 days of the date of the decision letter.
- 6.3.3 If an applicant wishes to request a review of the reasonableness of an offer or the suitability of the property, this must be made within 21 days of notification of a decision to make the offer. Late review requests can be considered under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the council.
- 6.3.4 Applicants who request reviews of decisions about suitability of accommodation will be advised to accept and move into accommodation pending the outcome of their review request. If the review goes in their favour alternative accommodation will be provided as quickly as possible. However, if the reasonableness and suitability of the offer is upheld the applicant will still have accommodation to live in whilst they consider their further options.
- 6.3.5 The applicant has the right of appeal to the county court if they are dissatisfied with the decision on a review.

6.4 The Local Government Ombudsman

- 6.4.1 The Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by local authorities and other bodies. They can be asked to investigate complaints about most council matters including housing.
- 6.4.2 If an applicant is not satisfied with the action the council has taken, and has exhausted the council's own complaints procedure, they can send a written complaint to the ombudsman.
- 6.4.3 The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted at:
Local Government Ombudsman
The Oaks No 2
Westwood Way
Westwood Business Park
Coventry CV4 8JB
Tel: 024 7682 0000
Website: www.lgo.org.uk

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint against a housing association, they should contact:

The Housing Ombudsman Service
Norman House
105 -109 Strand
London
WC2R 0AA
Tel: 08457 125 973

Website: www.ihos.org.uk

Chapter 7

7.1 Letting of accommodation

- 7.1.1 Properties will be advertised through the Home-Link scheme. The advertising will be carried out on a regular basis and for specific periods of time, known as advertising cycles.

7.2 Labelling property adverts

- 7.2.1 All adverts will include a description of the property and any other relevant information, for example rent charge, property size, length and type of tenancy, local facilities, disabled adaptations or if the property is housing for older people. The property will be labelled to show who is able to express an interest in it (known as bidding), for example, where a local connection is required, or if there is an age restriction on the property.
- 7.2.2 At least 1% of adverts will offer preference to social housing tenants needing to move for employment reasons (who would otherwise suffer hardship) under the Right to Move scheme.
- 7.2.3 Applicants should check the information contained in the property advert labelling to see if they qualify to be considered for the property.

7.3 Bedroom requirements

- 7.3.1 Bedroom requirements will generally be determined in line with the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) regulations (see s.5.4).
- 7.3.2 Landlords may choose to allow the under-occupation of certain properties including those that they advertise. The property advert will explain this on those properties the landlord is willing to under-occupy. Where a landlord is willing to allow under-occupation, this will generally be by allowing an applicant to be considered for one bedroom more than their assessed Local Housing Allowance (LHA) entitlement (for example allowing applicants with an assessed two bedroom LHA need to be considered for a 3-bedroom property). All households bidding for these properties and meeting the labelling criteria will be considered in line with the shortlisting criteria contained in 7.4.1 below.
- 7.3.3 Where a landlord is willing to allow under-occupation an affordability assessment will be completed to ensure that the applicant being considered for the property is able to meet rent payments. If the applicant is assessed as being unable to afford the rent payments the landlord may bypass them on the shortlist.

7.4 Shortlisting

- 7.4.1 After the end of an advertising cycle a shortlist of applicants bidding for the property and meeting the labelling criteria will be produced. Applicants will be ranked in order of their priority band with Band A above Band B, Band B above Band C, and Band C above Band D. Where more than one applicant in the same priority band appears on the shortlist they will be ranked in date order as determined by their date in band (see 2.3). In circumstances where there is more than one applicant in the same band with the same date in band, the applicant with the earliest registration date will appear higher on the shortlist. If there is more than one applicant with the same band, date in band and registration date an officer will make an allocation decision based on the best use of the housing stock and needs of the applicants.

7.4.2 Preference during shortlisting will be given to applicants within a band who have a proven connection to the local area.

7.4.3 When a shortlist of applicants is completed the landlord of the available property may offer an accompanied viewing of the property to a group of the highest priority applicants. This is to ensure that if the applicant who tops the shortlist decides not to take the tenancy, the property can be quickly offered to the next person on the shortlist.

7.4.4 After viewing the property the applicant at the top of the shortlist will be given 24 hours to accept or refuse the offer. If an applicant is offered a tenancy (verbally or in writing) and does not reply to accept that offer within the deadline given, the landlord will take this as a refusal of the offer. If the offer is refused the next person on the shortlist will be offered the property. The landlord will work down the shortlist in order.

7.4.5 In exceptional circumstances an officer may make a decision to bypass an applicant on a shortlist, for example, if, in doing so, the offer could put a vulnerable person at risk of any harm. Any such decisions will be explained fully to the applicant in writing by the landlord making the decision. This is known as a 'sensitive let'.

7.5 Formal offer of the property

7.5.1 Once the applicant has confirmed their acceptance of the tenancy the landlord of the property will write to confirm the formal offer of the tenancy. The Home-Link system will then not allow that applicant to be considered for any further properties and once the tenancy starts their housing register application will be cancelled.

7.5.2 Once the property is ready to let the landlord of the property will complete the tenancy sign up.

7.6 Withdrawal of offers

7.6.1 In exceptional circumstances an offer of a property may be withdrawn, for example:

- a) Where there has been a change in the applicants' circumstances
- b) Where the successful applicant has rent arrears or other housing related debts that had previously not come to light
- c) Following verification the applicant is not eligible for the property
- d) Where an error has been made in the advertising criteria
- e) Where an offer of accommodation could put a vulnerable person at risk of any harm
- f) Where the property is no longer available to let

7.7 Refusing an offer of accommodation

7.7.1 Usually, if an applicant refuses an offer of accommodation made through Home-Link, they will remain in their housing needs band. If an applicant unreasonably refuses three or more offers of a property made through Home-Link or has made little or no attempt to bid for accommodation, an officer may contact the applicant to offer support and assistance and verify their circumstances. The applicant may be moved into a lower priority band or be unable to bid for a specified period not exceeding 6 months

7.8 Allocations to staff, council members or their family members

- 7.8.1 Members of staff, their close family and elected members who require housing with South Cambridgeshire District Council may apply for housing in the same way as other applicants. Their status should be disclosed on the application form at the time of applying.
- 7.8.2 If an applicant who is a member of staff, elected member or a member of their direct family, makes a successful bid for a property the Director of Affordable Homes will be informed and must approve the letting prior to the formal offer being made.

7.9 Tenancy management outside the scope of the lettings policy

- 7.9.1 The following tenancy management areas are not included as part of this lettings policy as they are not included within part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended):
- a) Mutual exchanges
 - b) Introductory tenancies converted to secure/assured tenancies
 - c) Where a secure/assured tenancy of a property is assigned by way of succession to the same property
 - d) Where a secure/assured tenancy is assigned to someone who would be qualified to succeed to that tenancy if the secure/assured tenant died immediately before the assignment
 - e) Where court orders are made under one of the following:
 - i. Section 24 of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973
 - ii. Section 17 (1) of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984
 - iii. Paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Children Act 1989

Confidentiality and access to information

8.1 Applicants' rights to information

- 8.1.1 Applicants have the right to request such general information as will enable them to assess:
- a. How their application is likely to be treated under the lettings policy (including whether they are likely to be regarded as a member of a group of people who are to be given preference by this policy, (see Chapter 3)
 - b. Whether housing accommodation appropriate to their needs is likely to be made available to them.
- 8.1.2 Applicants have the right to request information held about their application which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account when considering whether to allocate them housing.

8.2 Data protection

- 8.2.1 When an applicant applies to the Home-Link scheme the partner organisations will only ask for information that they need to assess their eligibility and housing needs. The partner organisations will collect and keep data in accordance with the council's guidelines on handling personal, sensitive personal or special categories of personal data.
- 8.2.2 These guidelines are in accordance with the national regulations which cover both electronic and manual records and the govern everything we do with the data, including collecting, storing, using and disposing of it.
- 8.2.3 Personal, sensitive personal or special categories of personal data held about applicants will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:
- a) Where the individual who is the subject of the confidential information has consented to the disclosure
 - b) Where disclosure is made in accordance with an information sharing protocol that complies with the ICO's current data sharing code of practice
 - c) Where the council or a partner organisation is required by law to make such disclosures

8.3 Requesting information

- 8.3.1 Applicants are able to request copies of the information held regarding their application. Please note that we cannot provide you with personal information about other people if doing so will breach the regulations.

Appendix 1

Home-Link partner organisation list

Local authority

Cambridge City Council

Mandela House
4 Regent Street
Cambridge
CB2 1BY
Email: cbl@cambridge.gov.uk
Website: www.cambridge.gov.uk

South Cambridgeshire District Council

South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA
Email: cbl@scambs.gov.uk
Website: www.scambs.gov.uk

East Cambridgeshire District Council,

The Grange
Nutholt Lane
Ely
Cambs.
CB7 4PL
Email: customerservices@eastcambs.gov.uk
Website: www.eastcambs.gov.uk

Huntingdonshire District Council

Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 3TN
Email: housingervices@huntsdc.gov.uk
Website: www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Fenland District Council

Fenland Hall
County Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 8NQ
Email: info@fenland.gov.uk
Website: www.fenland.gov.uk

LSVT landlord

Sanctuary Housing

Avro House
49 Lancaster Way Business Park
Ely
Cambs
CB6 3NW
Email: east-lettings@sanctuary-housing.co.uk
Website: www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk

Luminus Group

Brook House
Ouse Walk
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 3QW
Email: homes@luminus.org.uk
Website: www.luminus.org.uk

Circle Housing

Beacon House
23 Hostmoor Avenue
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 0AX
Email: Lettings-March@circle.org.uk
Website: www.circle.org.uk

Local authority

Forest Heath District Council

College Heath Road
Mildenhall
Suffolk
IP28 7EY

Email:
customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk
Website: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3YU

Email:
customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk
Website: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk

LSVT landlord

Flagship Housing Group

Keswick Hall
Keswick
Norwich
Norfolk
NR4 6TJ

Email: info@flagship-housing.co.uk
Website: www.flagship-housing.co.uk

Havebury Housing Partnership

Havebury House
Western Way
Bury St. Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3SP

Email: office@havebury.com
Website: www.havebury.com

Appendix 2

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adapted properties – a property that has been adapted for an applicant with disabilities.

Advertising cycle – how often properties are advertised and available to make a bid on.

Advertised - properties that are advertised and are available for applicants to bid for through Home-Link.

Age restrictions - where a property is labelled, as only being available to applicants of a certain age.

Application number - a unique housing register number generated by the computer system.

Bedroom eligibility - how many bedrooms a household is assessed as needing.

Bid – the process used by applicants in registering an interest in an available property.

Choice based lettings (CBL) - a method of allocating social and affordable homes which have become available for letting by openly advertising them, and allowing applicants to bid for these.

Customer/applicant - is either a tenant of a partner organisation (including those in temporary accommodation) or a housing applicant on the Home-Link housing register.

Date of registration - the date an application form is registered with a partner organisation.

Date in band - the date an application is placed in a housing needs band and used as the applicable date when shortlisting.

Decision making organisation - the organisation that made a decision about a housing or homeless application.

Direct let - a property that is offered directly to an applicant, without them having to bid.

Domestic violence/abuse - is threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (physical, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional) by a partner, former partner or a family member.

Housing options - looking at the number of ways in which an applicant or customer might be assisted and supported to find a solution to their housing needs. Housing options may include private rented accommodation, mutual exchange, or even a help to buy product.

Housing register - a list of those requesting, eligible and qualifying for housing.

Housing related debts - are defined as recoverable current rent arrears, former tenant arrears, outstanding re-chargeable repairs, current and former housing related service charge arrears and court costs. They do not include Council Tax debts or Housing Benefit overpayments.

Joint application - where more than one applicant applies to join the housing register on one application form.

Labelling properties - describing who is eligible to bid for a property and if there will be a preference applied.

Local Connection - The connection an applicant has to a specific area.

Local elected members - each local authority is governed by a group of elected members also known as councillors.

LSVT landlord - Large Scale Voluntary Transfer, where a local authority has sold its housing stock to a Registered Provider

Mutual exchange - a scheme which allows two social housing tenants to swap their homes.

Partner organisations - all the councils that are partners to the Home-Link scheme.

Registered Providers - also known as housing associations. These are social landlords who also provide social and affordable rented homes for which applicants/customers can bid for through the Home-Link scheme.

Regular Forces - Means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, Her Majesty's regular army or the Royal Air Force

Reserve Forces - Means the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Regular Reserves, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force

Transferring tenant - an applicant who is currently a tenant of a local authority or registered provider and who wishes to move.



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

21 March 2018

Shared Ownership – Approach to Restricted Stair-casing in Cambourne

Purpose

1. To seek a decision from the Housing Portfolio Holder on whether to waive the restriction on stair-casing of shared ownership properties in Cambourne, which is in a Designated Protected Area.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder approves:
 - (i) To lift the stair-casing restriction on shared ownership properties in Cambourne; and
 - (ii) on grant funded schemes, apply to Homes England (previously known as the HCA) for a waiver of the restriction.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. In lifting the restriction to stair-casing at Cambourne, this will ensure that existing shared owners are not adversely affected in being able to sell their property, given the availability of shared ownership properties that are more attractive to new buyers (i.e. sold at a lower percentage) and other help to buy initiatives available in the village. For new shared ownership properties being built in Cambourne it will mean that mortgages will be more readily available for those looking to get a foot on the property ladder and that registered providers are able to maximise their borrowing capacity to support the delivery of new affordable homes.
4. Lifting the restriction on stair-casing will ensure that existing shared owners are not disadvantaged when selling their properties. Currently new properties are available to first time buyers at more attractive shared ownership percentages or are offered with other help to buy incentives making their higher percentage levels less affordable.

Background

5. Sections 300-302 of the Housing & Regeneration Act 2008, which came into effect on 7th September 2009, enabled the Secretary of State to designate 'Protected Areas', ensuring shared ownership properties can be retained in rural locations where they would be difficult to replace if any stock is lost through sales.

6. The effect of the Designated Protected Areas Order (DPA) is to prevent occupiers of shared ownership homes within protected areas from buying 100% of the property at some future date (stair-casing); instead they can only buy up to 80% meaning that the property remains as shared ownership in perpetuity (albeit at a higher percentage rate).
7. Since the Act came into effect, the government, through Homes England have produced a DPA policy update with guidance for Local Authorities. The update acknowledged restrictions of DPAs and the policy of retaining shared ownership stock in perpetuity. The guidance states that

'It is evident that for some of the areas which are now covered by Designated Protected Area status, the policy aim of retention of stock is not an issue. These include planned urban extensions, new towns and many suburban sites where levels of existing or proposed development indicate that shared ownership homes would not be hard to replace.'

Registered providers developing grant funded shared ownership housing where stair-casing is restricted can sometimes be affected by the limited availability of mortgages for purchasers; also many providers have raised concerns over their financial ability to guarantee to buy back properties as required by the shared ownership lease if the leaseholder wishes to sell'

8. As a response to these issues, Homes England has agreed that under certain conditions, it is able to waive the particular conditions of grant relating to DPA status. Where schemes are not grant funded, the guidance states that *'the local authority should carefully consider the merits of such a restriction if it imposes the same barriers to development that the HCA is seeking to overcome in these particular areas.'*

Considerations

9. Cambourne began development in 2000, and has seen around 4,000 homes built. The village is set within a Designated Protected Area, a designation predominantly identified for areas with a population of under 3,000 – Cambourne had a population of 8,186 at the last census in 2011, which will have increased even more as new houses have been built over the last 7 years.
10. The majority of shared ownership properties in Cambourne, the majority have a restriction placed on them through the S.106 Agreement and subsequent lease agreements which prevent any owner-occupier purchasing more than 80% of the property. There are currently around 350 shared ownership properties in Cambourne and this is set to increase with the proposed growth within the village of over 2,000 more homes.
11. Over the last year, the Council has been approached by registered providers and owner-occupiers of shared ownership properties asking if the restriction could be lifted. The main reasons cited include:
 - Existing owner-occupiers of restricted shared ownership properties have found it difficult to sell on their property. Where 80% of the property is purchased through 'stair-casing' this becomes less attractive to new purchasers who would either look to purchase a property offering a lower share (i.e. 40%) which is more affordable or they are likely to stretch their resources to purchase a 100% property on the open market. Where

availability of shared ownership is not an issue, such as in Cambourne, having a 'stair-casing' restriction on the property becomes a barrier to mobility and often means the owner-occupier becomes stuck and unable to move. This is evidenced through the requests received which included one owner-occupier who had to move abroad for work having to leave his property empty because he could not find a buyer for 80% of the market value, and in another case the property became too small for the household as the family had grown but were unable to find a purchaser so that they could move on.

- For registered providers, the restriction has an impact on new properties being built as lenders are more reluctant to lend to registered providers for schemes with restricted stair-casing. It also becomes a less attractive deal for potential purchasers when other schemes are on offer in the village, such as help to buy equity loans. Having a restricted stair-case can also affect an individual purchaser being able to access the most favourable mortgage interest rates.

12. Given the number of shared ownership properties in Cambourne and the proposed growth, it is therefore considered that there will continue to be a supply of shared ownership properties in the village, even where the restriction is lifted, Research nationally has shown that only approximately 20% of shared-owners go on to stair-case to 100%.
13. Where shared ownership properties are 'stair-cased', the capital receipts received by the registered provider are reinvested into the delivery of affordable housing.
14. If approval is given to waive the restriction, the Council will then have to apply to Homes England for their approval as the majority of schemes at Cambourne were grant funded. If this is obtained, the next step will be to notify the relevant registered providers that if they so wish, they may apply to the Council as the Planning Authority to request a deed of variation to the S.106 Agreement. Ultimately the decision to lift the restriction on individual properties will be for the registered provider to agree an amendment to their lease agreement with the owner-occupier, once all other approvals have been obtained.

Options

15. **Option A:** To approve:
 - (i) To lift the stair-casing restriction on shared ownership properties in Cambourne; and
 - (ii) on grant funded schemes, apply to Homes England (previously known as the HCA) for a waiver of the restriction.
16. This option is recommended as it is considered that it will not have an adverse effect on the number of shared ownership units available in Cambourne. It will also support mobility for those wishing to move on and enable registered providers to deliver shared ownership homes that are competitive with other home buy initiatives in the village. It will also ensure that the availability of mortgages/lending is maximised for both the registered provider and individual purchasers, thereby supporting the delivery of affordable homes.

17. **Option B:** To reject the proposal to allow existing and future shared ownership homes at Cambourne to staircase to full owner-occupation of 100%. This option is not recommended as it is considered that due to the growth and supply of shared ownership properties in Cambourne, having a 'stair-casing' restriction on the property becomes a barrier to mobility and often means the owner-occupier becomes stuck and unable to move. Having a restriction also has an impact on the availability of mortgages (especially where there are large numbers of shared ownership in one area) and for registered providers to maximise their borrowing.

Implications

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

Financial

19. None.

Legal

20. Following legal advice, it is understood that once the appropriate approvals from the Housing Portfolio Holder and Homes England (for grant funded schemes) have been received, the registered provider wishing to lift the stair-casing restriction will still need to apply for a deed of variation to the relevant S.106 Agreement.

Staffing

21. None.

Risk Management

22. None.

Equality and Diversity

23. None.

Climate Change

24. None.

Consultation responses

25. Not applicable.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim (B) – Homes for our Future

26. Secure the delivery of a wide range of housing to meet the needs of existing and future communities.

Report Author: Julie Fletcher – Head of Housing Strategy
Telephone: (01954) 713352



REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder
LEAD OFFICER: Housing Director

21 March 2018

Starter Homes at Northstowe Heads of Terms for use of capital receipts

Purpose

1. To seek approval for the principles in the attached Heads of Terms (**Appendix 1**) which sets out a framework for how the Council and Homes England (formerly known as the HCA) will work together to reinvest receipts realised through 'stair-casing' of the Northstowe Starter Homes. This follows the deed of variation to the S.106 for Northstowe Phase 2 approved in December 2017.
2. This is not a key decision but has been brought before the Housing Portfolio Holder for formal approval of the Heads of Terms to enable the Council to work with Homes England to draft the Strategic Collaboration Agreement.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder approves the Heads of Terms attached at **Appendix 1**.
4. Following approval of the Heads of Terms, a legally binding Strategic Collaboration Agreement will be drafted for both parties to sign up to. It is estimated that the Agreement will be completed by June 2018.

Reasons for Recommendations

5. Approval of the Heads of Terms and subsequent Strategic Collaboration Agreement will ensure there is a robust and transparent process in place that enables the Council and Homes England to prioritise future funding realised from stair-casing receipts from the Northstowe Starter Homes. This will support the delivery of affordable housing in Northstowe and, where appropriate, the wider District.

Background

6. On 7th December 2016, Planning Committee approved amendments to the S.106 Agreement to revise the affordable housing provision from 20% affordable housing to 40% starter homes and 10% affordable rented housing. This decision was based on the proposals set out within the Housing & Planning Act 2016 relating to starter homes, which would be subject to further regulations.

7. Following the Housing & Planning Act 2016, the government published its White Paper 'Fixing our broken housing market' which set out further proposals for starter homes, namely:
 - Starter homes to be targeted to households that need them most, with an income of less than £80,000 (similar to the income criteria for shared ownership)
 - 15 year repayment period for starter homes - so that when the property is sold on to a new owner within this period, some or all of the discount is repaid.
8. Proposed changes to the initial starter homes model will need to be made through regulations, which are still awaited.
9. SCDC and Homes England have been developing a bespoke Northstowe Starter Homes product that will ensure that monies deriving from the Northstowe Starter Homes discount are reinvested locally. A deed of variation to the S106 Agreement was completed on 22 December 2017 to incorporate the bespoke Northstowe Starter Homes model.

Considerations

10. Officer negotiations are still progressing relating to the operational aspects of how the Northstowe Starter Homes model would work. However, the principles of the model are similar to an equity product and include:
 - SCDC and Homes England to enter into a Strategic Collaboration Agreement, that will set out a framework within which both parties will work together to utilise the receipts realised through 'staircasing' [as set out below].
 - All receipts to be reinvested by agreement of SCDC and Homes England to support the delivery of new affordable housing, with priority given to provision within the Northstowe development and cascading out to the District.
11. Whilst the mechanism for the Northstowe Starter Home is still being explored, the model will apply a 5 year restricted period, following which the owner/occupier has the ability to:
 - staircase out to 100%. The 20% capital receipt from the equity is paid into an Escrow Account controlled by both parties.
 - If the owner/occupier wishes to sell:
 - SCDC has the option to purchase the remaining 80% at market value (through proceeds in the Escrow account or other funds). Property can then be used for other tenures of affordable housing.
 - Option for property to be marketed at full market value – 20% of proceeds to be paid into Escrow Account.
 - Option for property to be marketed at 20% discount of full market value (price cap & first time buyer qualification no longer apply, but mechanism for securing discount to apply to new mortgagee).
 - If property sold within the five year restricted period, then it must be sold on as a Northstowe Starter Home and the same discount as first disposal to be applied (minimum 20%).

12. The criteria agreed for the Northstowe Starter Home (as set out in the deed of variation to the S.106 Agreement) includes:
- Property price capped at £250,000 (subject to indexation following the delivery of the first 70 starter homes)
 - Must be a first time buyer (although age restriction would not apply)
 - Must occupy a Northstowe Starter Home as their only or main residence
 - Must not have a gross annual household income of more than £80,000.
13. An indicative example of the potential receipts that could be achieved is shown below:
- Property purchased at £250,000 with the 20% discount applied (open market value (£313,000))
 - Property 'stair-cased' out after 6 years (assuming 5% increase in house prices) = £328,650 open market value
 - 20% discount/value balance = £65,730 (payable into Escrow Account)

Options

14. The proposed Heads of Terms are attached at **Appendix 1**.
15. The deed of variation for the S.106 Agreement has been approved which allows the 'equity model' for the Northstowe Starter Homes to be delivered. However, without the approval of the Heads of Terms and subsequent Strategic Collaboration Agreement there is no legally binding process agreed between the parties as to the administration of the future capital receipts. It is therefore essential that the Council and Homes England continue to work together to agree the Strategic Collaboration Agreement.

Implications

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

Financial

17. Any monies realised through stair-casing or resale of the Northstowe Starter Homes is bound by the S.106 Agreement to be placed in the joint Escrow account which cannot be spent unless agreed between the Council and Homes England. However, without an agreed mechanism as set out in the Heads of Terms and subsequent Strategic Collaboration Agreement, there is no clear and transparent process to ensure appropriate governance, strategic overview and grant conditions.

Legal

18. The deed of variation and Heads of Terms have been drafted in consultation with 3C Shared Legal Service.

Staffing
19. None.

Risk Management
20. The risk of not agreeing the Heads of Terms and subsequent Strategic Collaboration Agreement would put the Council at a disadvantage in terms of its influence and strategic overview for reinvesting funds in the District.

Equality and Diversity
21. None.

Climate Change
22. None.

Consultation responses

23. The principles of the Heads of Terms and the Northstowe Starter Homes model have previously been discussed at Leaders meetings which have received their support.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 1 – Homes for our Future
24. Increasing the range of housing and tenure options for residents.

Background Papers

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

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

Deed of Variation dated 22 December 2017 made pursuant to Sections 106 & 106A of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Report Author: Julie Fletcher – Head of Housing Strategy
Telephone: (01954) 713352

HEADS of TERMS
for a
strategic collaboration agreement

Between

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC)

And

Homes and Communities Agency ('HCA') currently trading as Homes England

Objective

To express the framework within which both parties will work together to:

- Utilise the receipts realised through "staircasing" (as defined in the section 106 agreement for the development dated 9 January 2017 and varied on 22 December 2017) from the Northstowe Starter Home Units being delivered as part of the affordable housing provision at Northstowe Phase 2 (Planning permission reference S/2011/14/OL).

These funds realised through staircasing from the Northstowe Starter Home Units (NHSUs) must only be reinvested by agreement of SCDC and the HCA to support the delivery of new affordable housing, with priority given to provision within the Northstowe development, but if there is an opportunity elsewhere within the South Cambridgeshire District then HCA and SCDC are not precluded from reinvesting funds for those purposes.

Finance

The monies generated from staircasing from the Northstowe Starter Home Units shall be paid into an escrow account controlled by both parties as and when such monies become available (i.e. upon sale or full purchase of the Northstowe Starter Home Units in accordance with the relevant provisions of the section 106 agreement).

The precise model for controlling unpurchased equity in Northstowe Starter Home units and the mechanism for releasing units from restriction when fully purchased shall be subject to further consideration as there are a variety of options available including a second charge attached to each NSHU in favour of HCA.

Any fees or costs associated with staircasing, acquisition or disposal shall be borne separately by the initiating party such that the full value of discounted equity is realised and paid into the escrow account.

Only monies actually available shall be paid into the escrow account. So for example: if the discount in relation to a relevant NSHU is controlled by a second charge, and a disposal arises as a result of the holder of the first charge exercising its power of sale/taking possession which results in no monies being available under the second charge then there are no monies to pay into the escrow account.

The monies shall be invested without liability on either party to repay the equivalent or different value of funds back into the escrow account unless a mechanism can be agreed in relation to a scenario where the housing scheme into which monies have been invested realises a profit.

The meaning of 'profit' shall be defined for each case, as appropriate. In the main, it shall mean either:

- uplift in land value (if site is sold to a developer or Housing Provider); or
- total return less development costs (including land purchase)

The profit from future housing schemes and realised equity where this fund is invested shall be recycled back into the escrow account for future use with the same objectives.

Both parties shall agree a method of accounting for the monies and at the half-yearly meeting of the Steering Group an up to date report shall be tabled setting out the accounts of the escrow including costs to date and forecast expenditure and balances

Use of the funds

Funds shall only be used for capital projects including all building works, infrastructure, associated design and planning fees and land purchase but shall not be used at any time for payment of staff salary or revenue costs.

Projects within Northstowe shall be prioritised and no monies shall be spent beyond the SCDC boundary.

Neither party will remove any funding from the escrow account without the express approval of the other.

Governance

The Strategic Collaboration Agreement shall be governed by two representatives from SCDC and two representatives from Homes England and written records shall be kept of meetings and decisions.

Decisions will only be effective upon agreement between the parties. In the event of non-agreement, this will be referred to a dispute resolution procedure to be agreed.

Partnering Ethos

Both parties shall respect each other's ambitions and constraints, shall be open and honest, re-imagining the way we deliver and are committed to the

mutual objective of delivering more and better housing for the people of South Cambridgeshire, continuous improvement; and mutual problem solving.

Ending of Agreement

After a period of twenty years from the date of the agreement, the HCA and SCDC shall agree and institute a framework to place full responsibility with the council for the funds in so far as the objectives shall remain and they will publish annual account of the sum and investments for public scrutiny.

Assignment

Within the 20 year period, the HCA may where it is obliged to do so as a result of specific national policy or legislation assign its role in the Agreement to a successor in function or to a specified alternative organisation that is designated by the change in policy or legislation as having direct responsibility for enabling the delivery of affordable housing. It is acknowledged that in the SCA the term "HCA" shall be construed to include its successor (if any) to its statutory functions.

Within the 20 year period, SCDC may where it is obliged to do so as a result of specific national policy or legislation assign its role in the Agreement to a successor in function or to a specified alternative organisation that is designated by the change in policy or legislation as having direct responsibility for enabling the delivery of affordable housing. It is acknowledged that in the SCA the term "SCDC" shall be construed to include its successor (if any) to its statutory functions.

Otherwise the HCA and SCDC must agree to an assignment by either party of its role.

The Strategic Collaborative Agreement may otherwise be terminated upon the mutual agreement of both parties. What sums of money are available in the escrow account at the time of termination, as well as any profit eventually realised from Funds in 'active investment' shall;

- i. be split 50/50, or if both parties agree
- ii. be transferred into another body with similar objectives such as a community trust.

Target date of 1st June 2018 for formal exchange of a Strategic Collaborative Agreement signed by SCDC and HCA to reflect the above Heads of Terms.

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Agenda Item 7



South
Cambridgeshire
District Council

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

21 March 2018

Affordable Homes Service Plan 2017/18 and 2018/19

Purpose

1. To provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with an update on the progress of the 2017/18 Service Plan and to seek approval for the 2018/19 Affordable Homes Service Plan.
2. This is not a key decision but has been brought before the Housing Portfolio Holder because it sets out the proposed key actions for the Affordable Homes Service for the forthcoming year.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder approves the Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2018/19 (**Appendix 2**) and notes the progress to date on existing projects within the 2017/18 Service Plan.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The draft Service Plan actions for 2018/19 set out in Appendix 2 have been developed taking into account the key aims and objectives of the Council, central government direction and the forthcoming priorities for the Affordable Homes Service.

Background

5. Draft actions to be included in the service plan for 2018/19 were agreed at the Housing Portfolio Holder meeting on 18th October 2017. These have now been incorporated into the Affordable Homes service plan template for monitoring throughout the year.

Considerations

6. As part of this process, the current service plan for 2017/18 has been reviewed on its progress as outlined below:

P1 – Housing Strategy 2017-2022 (Cfwd)
To work with Cambridge City Council and the Combined Authority to draft a joint Housing Strategy with Cambridge City.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scope for Strategy approved by Shared Housing Board on 22/5/2017• Workshops held with officers and tenants of both South Cambs DC and Cambridge City during July/August 2017• Strategy currently being drafted with a view for internal consultation during March/April 2018• External consultation to be carried out May/July 2018• Expected adoption of Strategy by September 2018
P2 – Tenant Profiling Project (Cfwd)
To obtain robust and up to date information on the profile of our tenants to enable us to understand the impact of

welfare changes and help mitigate any negative impacts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project commenced in March 2017 with just over 1100 questionnaires completed. The commitment of officers within Neighbourhood Services to support the project by carrying out home visits alongside their day job is commendable but there has been slippage in the original timeframe we set to complete the programme of visits. • The majority of tenants we have met with so far have expressed their gratitude towards the team taking the time to engage with them and seek their views. There are great examples of us supporting tenants to seek additional benefits, giving advice around fuel poverty, signposting to services that tenants were not previously aware of and supporting community events so that tenants who were expressing concerns around loneliness could come together. • To provide this level of engagement, it is recognised that more resources are required to support the project and a bid has been made to have an additional officer to work alongside those already taking part. The original timeframe for the completion of the project has now been extended into a rolling programme.
<p>P3 – Fixed Term Tenancies</p> <p>To prepare for any policy changes in relation to fixed term tenancies when further details are published</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCDC participated in DCLG workshop to help shape and influence proposed regulations relating to fixed term tenancies – March/April 2017 • Project now on hold – waiting for further confirmation from DCLG on proposals.
<p>P4 – Joint Services (Cwfd)</p> <p>To explore new and efficient ways of delivering core front line services.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been a pilot of shared housing management services with Cambridge City Council for the past year. In that time there has developed a greater understanding of both Councils which has allowed for sharing of best practice in housing. The service at this moment will not be proceeding towards a shared service but both Councils will continue to build on the links that have been made and share best practice. • The review of the Sheltered Housing Communal Review has commenced with a pilot of the initial review reporting to the Housing Portfolio Holder in March 2018 to seek permission to role out the project. • Work with Housing Associations is continuing as South Cambridgeshire District Council is represented at the Communities Theme Group which is comprised of all active housing associations in the area. Its remit is to establish where housing associations can work in partnership with Councils to add value to existing and new communities. • Discussions regarding Shire Homes providing housing management services to other agencies are on going. • All savings required from the HRA have been identified
<p>P5 – Social Value</p> <p>To understand our community better to enable us to help improve economic, social and environmental well-being</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on Social Value is progressing with the greatest impact being made in the employment of a Neighbourhood Support Officer employed by Mears Group and embedded into the Neighbourhood Services Team. The role is dedicated to supporting tenants who have been identified as having significant financial issues. The role is proving very effective at engaging with and assisting those households who have been difficult to engage with. • A Community Impact Assessment Tool has been developed and piloted and will be contrasted against other tools available through other organisations such as HACT. • The Through the Door project is being taken forward by the Communities Team. • South Cambridgeshire District Council is integrated into the “Think Family” and “Early Help Initiatives” lead by Cambridgeshire County Council
<p>P6 – Homelessness Mitigation (Cwfd)</p> <p>To ensure the Council understands and monitors the risks of increasing homelessness following policy changes in welfare reform, the spending review, Housing and Planning Bill and the Homeless Reduction Bill..</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful training for external agencies in relation to the new duties and shared responsibilities set out in the Homeless Reduction Act – delivered February 2018. • Successful in-depth training for Housing Advice and Options staff in relation to new duties set out in Homeless Reduction Act – delivered February 2018. • All training delivered collaboratively with neighbouring councils to ensure cost savings. • Recognition of the successful partnership working arrangements supporting the Trailblazer

<p>project. Selected to participate in a national evaluation of the project – April 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing joint work with Sub Regional Homeless Leads and partner agencies to take forward revised pathways and protocols for accessing accommodation. • Refreshed timetable for publishing a new homeless strategy. Homeless Review currently under way. Homeless Strategy to be published in Q2 of 2018/19.
<p>P7 – Private Sector Leasing Scheme</p> <p>To develop an in-house PSL scheme that replaces the existing King Street scheme to provide access to affordable accommodation in the private rented sector.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 properties let. • 3 confirmed properties in the pipeline. • Up to 5 additional properties in negotiation.
<p>P8 – Purpose built shared accommodation</p> <p>Assess the need for shared accommodation in view of welfare reforms and changes to LHA on social rents and look at development options for this type of accommodation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project not taken forward given the change in proposals for including social rents within the LHA criteria which would have meant that a single person would only qualify for the shared accommodation room rate. As this is no longer happening, the preference is to continue to develop one bedroom accommodation rather than shared.
<p>P9 – High Value Sales & 1:1 replacement programme</p> <p>Review the options to help mitigate the impacts from the potential sale of high value Council properties.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project postponed until further information is available from government on the proposals for high value sales. • As there is still no secondary legislation in place for the policy, the decision has been taken as part of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy to defer the assumption of any payment until at least April 2019.
<p>P10 – Devolution Housing Delivery</p> <p>To establish a framework to enable delivery of an additional 2,000 new affordable housing starts during the five year period commencing April 2017.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework completed and pipeline of schemes handed over to the Combined Authority March 2018 • Pipeline representing around 85% of the target
<p>P11 – Housing System Procurement (Cwfd)</p> <p>To undertake a procurement exercise for a fully integrated Housing IT System.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenders were returned from 3 suppliers, one of which was disallowed because it did not reach the required standard. • A joint assessment panel has been convened with Cambridge City and assessments of the tenders have been completed. • Site visits are being carried out to reference sites • Financial and technical assessments are being carried out by 3C • Staff demonstrations of the two systems have been arranged for w/c 19th March both here and at City. • Discussions will be undertaken with the suppliers to clarify any technical points • It is hoped that a decision will be made in April 2018.
<p>P12 – CLT Umbrella</p> <p>To enable community-led development for affordable housing to meet local needs as an alternative model of delivery</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2017 - CLT East appointed to provide advice and support to community groups on behalf of South Cambridgeshire DC and Cambridge City • September 2017 - Launch of the community-led housing grant through the Parish Forum. Groups with an interest in developing their own affordable housing for the community can apply for up to £4,500 in grant funding to cover start-up costs. • September 2017 - Publicity of scheme through Members and Parish Bulletin and Cambridge News • November 2017 - Approval of first community-led development grant fund of £4,500 to Cottenham Community Land Trust • CLT East currently working with 15 communities who are interested in taking forward community-led development • Publication of a community-led strategy on target for July 2018

P11 – Self Build (Cwfd)

To comply with the new statutory requirement to promote self build and provide a self sustaining sub-regional service, as well as maximising HRA assets where there is the potential for self build plots

- Promotion of register ongoing – currently 788 people interested in self build registered.
- Workshop held for self builders on 5th July 2017 - bringing together leading industry experts to help people learn more about new self build legislation and regulations, modular building construction methods and practical building tips.
- Work is progressing well in preparing and marketing parcels of HRA land that provide self-build opportunities that will help facilitate the delivery of new homes in the district.
- Officers have identified HRA sites with the potential to provide in the region of 100 self-build plots in total. A rolling programme of potential plots is currently being progressed, with the first single plot having now been sold. Outline planning approval has been gained for 7 of the plots, which will be marketed in early 2018 and a further 4 are in the planning process with committee dates scheduled.
- The authority has now recruited to a dedicated post to take forward work in respect of the sale of these plots.

Options

7. The Portfolio Holder is requested to approve the key actions identified for the 2018/19 Service Plan, as set out below and at Appendix 2, and to suggest changes or additions where required.

Ref	Project	Objective
P1	Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy	To work with Cambridge City and the Greater Cambridge Partnership to draft a joint Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy
P2	Community Impact & Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of the Communal Room Review• Health & Safety internal review (HRA)
P3	Homelessness Mitigation	To ensure the Council understands and monitors the risks of increasing homelessness following policy changes
P4	Housing & Planning Policy Review and Updates	To have up to date policies in relation to housing following the adoption of the Local Plan and Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy
P5	Greater Cambridge Partnership Housing Investment Plan	Work with Greater Cambridge Partnership (CGP) to provide detail for 10-50 million investment proposal for keyworker housing
P6	Options for New Housing Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To continue to deliver council new build affordable homes• To comply with the new statutory requirements to promote self-build and provide a self sustaining sub regional service, as well as maximising HRA assets where there is the potential for self-build plots• To begin a project to explore modular construction
P7	Projects to support the Health and Independence of Older People	Making housing choices available that help to maintain the health and independence of older people
P8	InTouch Project	To take forward the Digital Inclusion Strategy within Housing Services, linking to financial inclusion, communications and loneliness.
P9	Local Housing Company Group Structure and delivery of Cambourne High Street	Work up a business case for the establishment of a Local Housing Company Group Structure in order to take forward development opportunities.

Implications

8. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -
9. Appendix 2 details the additional resources required for each project. Where extra financial resources are required these have been incorporated within the HRA Business Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 22 February 2018.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

10. The Tenant Participation Group have been kept informed of the key challenges and priorities facing the housing service in the coming year.

Effect on Strategic Aims

11. The Affordable Homes service plan is important for all four of the Council's main strategic aims.

Background Papers

None.

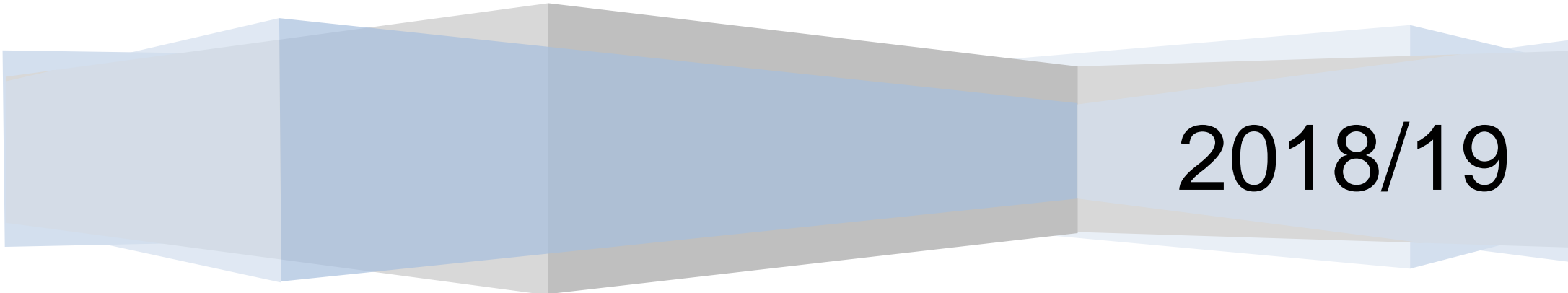
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Putting the HEART into Housing

DRAFT Affordable Homes Service Plan



2018/19

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Corporate Long Term Vision and Aims

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.

- We will work towards this Vision through the following strategic aims: **Living Well** - Support our Communities to remain in good health whilst continuing to protect the natural and built environment
- **Homes for our future** - Secure the delivery of a wide range of housing to meet the needs of existing and future communities
- **Connected Communities** – Work with partners to ensure new transport and digital infrastructure supports and strengthens communities and that our approach to growth sustains prosperity
- **An Innovative and Dynamic Organisation** – Adopt a more commercial and business-like approach to ensure we can continue to deliver the best possible services at the lowest possible cost

Relevant Areas of Focus for the Housing Service from the Corporate Plan 2018-2019

A) Living Well

- 4) Having a planning policy framework that enables new and established communities to be thriving, healthy, safe and attractive places to live
- 5) Finding solutions for people facing homelessness and managing the impacts of welfare reform on our vulnerable residents

B) Homes for our Future

- 3) Increasing the range of housing and tenure options for residents
- 4) Making housing choices available that help to maintain the health and independence of older people
- 5) Continuing to provide safe and high quality council housing, helping to keep our tenants in good health

D) An Innovative and Dynamic Organisation

- 1) Reducing duplication and maximising use of digital technology to make it easier and more convenient for customers to access our services
- 3) Developing a clear strategy for the council to take advantage of commercial and investment opportunities as they arise to ensure continued delivery of services that local people value

Housing Vision and Aims

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.

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

Mitigating Risk

Potential operational risks to the service are identified at an early stage through the HRA Business Plan Risk Register and Housing Risk Register, which are monitored quarterly by the Housing Services Management Team (HSMT) and Executive Management Team (EMT). High level risks identified will also be included in the Strategic Risk Register for monitoring by CMT and EMT and approval by the Corporate & Customer Services Portfolio Holder. Where service plan projects help to mitigate the risks identified in the Risk Registers, these are noted in the tables below (pages 7-15).

Risks relevant to Service Plan			
Corporate Risk Register			
STR3 (was STR05)	Failure to meet Housing Need	STR9 (was STR24)	HRA Business Plan
STR5 (was STR15)	Welfare Reform	STR10 (was STR25)	Increase in cost of managing homelessness
STR6 (was STR19)	Demands on services from an ageing population	STR11 (was STR26)	Business Improvement & Efficiency Programme
STR7 (was STR20)	Partnership Working with Cambridgeshire County Council		
Housing Risk Register		HRA Business Plan Risk Register	
HS1	Increase in cost of managing homelessness	BP3	Capital Programme Costs
HS2	Responsive Repairs	BP6	Right To Buy Sales
HS4	HRA Business Plan	BP7	Government Policy Changes
HS5	New Build Strategy	BP10	New Build
HS6	MAPPA & MARAC	BP11	Cost inflation
HS7	Mental Health issues	BP12	Sale of High Value Homes

Housing Service

This service plan covers both strategic housing functions of the Council and also its landlord role. The service plan for Affordable Homes should be read in conjunction with the [Housing Strategy 2012 to 2016](#) (a joint Housing Strategy 2018 to 2023 is currently being drafted) and the [Housing Revenue Account \(HRA\) Business Plan](#).

Monitoring of the Service Plan is completed by our Housing Services Management Team and progress reported in our [Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders](#) published in Autumn, as well as up to date information contained in our twice yearly [Tenant and Leaseholder Newsletter](#).

The Housing Service has three primary functions:

- Landlord service - providing housing management and property maintenance services to over 5,750 homes. This also includes housing related support and the management of gypsy & traveller sites.
- Housing strategy and development – providing a strategic lead on housing issues within the District including assessing housing needs, bringing empty homes back into use, performance management and the Council’s new build programme. This also includes an enabling role working in partnership with other local authorities and housing associations to deliver new affordable homes within the District and in partnership on strategic sites close to Cambridge City.
- Housing advice and options – providing a homelessness prevention service and to provide accommodation for those in housing need (including those who are already homeless), through a choice based lettings scheme and other housing options. The provision of this service delivers several statutory requirements for the local authority.

Key Stats (note: details can be located from the ‘[Housing Statistical Information Leaflet](#)’)

Housing Stock as of March 2017

General Needs homes = 4179
 Supported homes = 1066
 Equity Share homes = 348
 Leasehold homes = 122 (sold flats)
Total homes managed = 5,715

There are also 24 First Time Buyer homes and 28 shared ownership properties

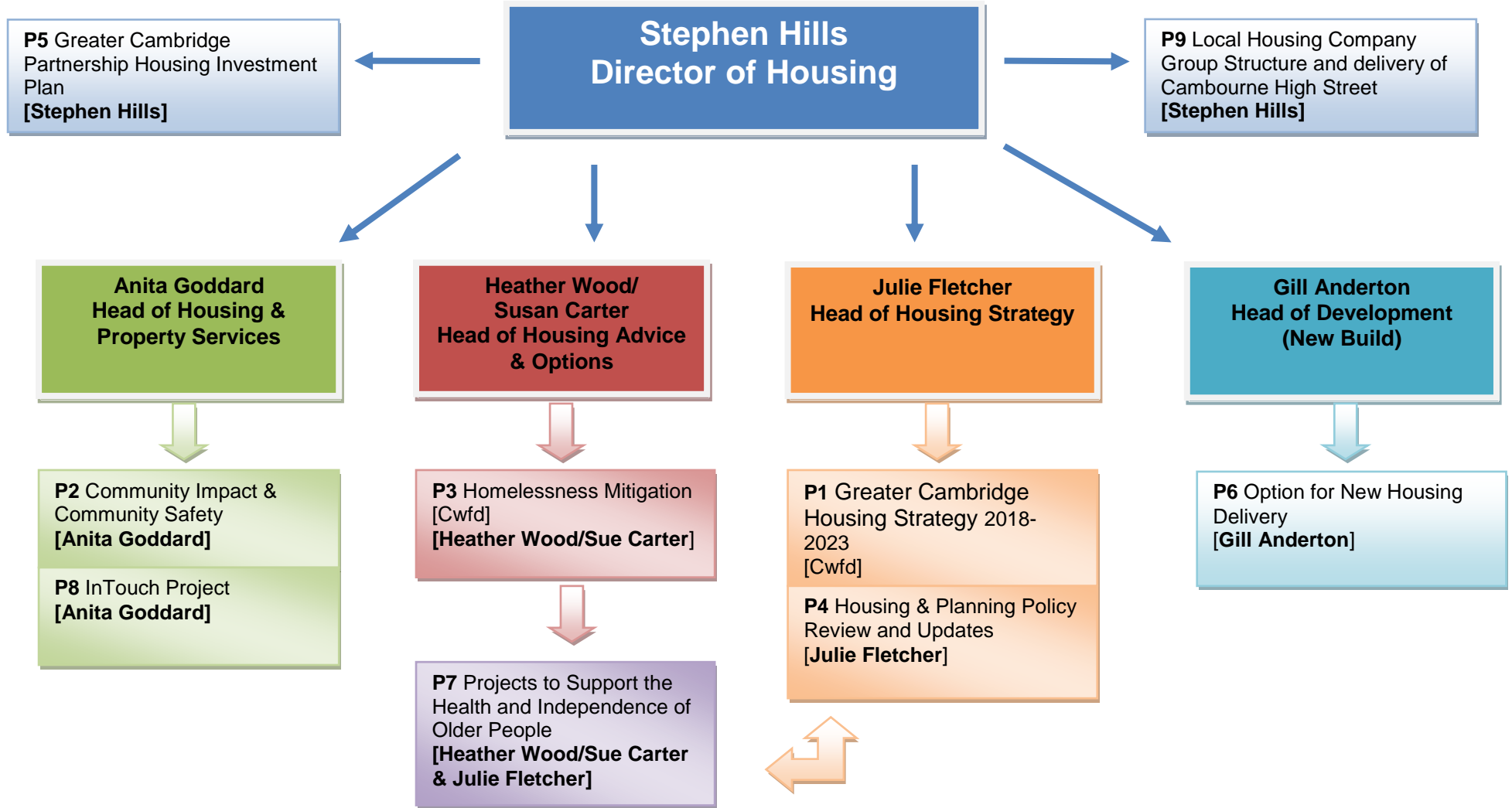
In 2016/17

Total council homes let = 274
 Total housing association homes let = 165
Total homes let through Home-Link = 439

Homelessness acceptances = 167
 Homes receiving capital works = 3541
 Affordable homes built = 152

Service Improvement Project/Activity Overview

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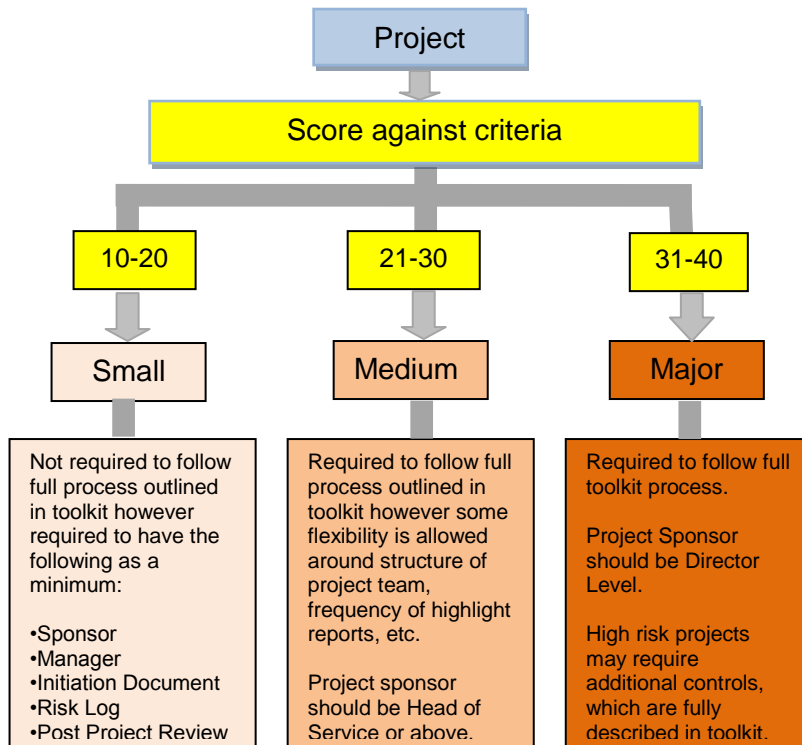
Project/Activity Programme

The following pages set out the programme for each project/activity identified. The prime objective for each and the expected outputs to be completed during the life of the service plan are detailed, alongside agreed timescales. Each project/activity is scored using the corporate project scoring matrix, aligned to the corporate aims and assessed against the social value relating to Value for Money. Projects/Activities are also assessed as to how they help mitigate identified risk from the Risk Registers and if any additional resources are required.

Scoring Projects and Resources

Project scores are based on the level of management that needs to be put in place. The projects are scored against criteria set out in the project management toolkit to give a total score which will indicate whether the project is small, medium or major.

The resource implications for each project within the service plan are identified in the tables below (see pages 7-15).



The service plan for Affordable Homes includes:
2 x Small; 4 x Medium and 3 x Major

Value for Money (VFM)

We will achieve our aims in the most efficient manner at the best possible price and be able to demonstrate it.

This will include:

- Doing the right things to meet the aims of Affordable Homes (effectiveness)
- Using our assets in the best way to deliver these aims
- Having the right assets to deliver (asset management)
- Having the right processes in place to deliver (efficiency)
- Achieving the right outcomes – meeting standards (quality) aimed for

To ensure we are a high performing housing service and to help identify areas for improvement, we compare ourselves with other housing organisations using HouseMark – see our Annual Core Benchmarking Reports. The Annual Report for 2016/17 highlighted how we provide value for money for our tenants, which was published on our website and inside the Tenant & Leaseholder Magazine. See also the Affordable Homes Value for Money Framework.

For the service plan, each project/activity is evaluated (i.e. it's not a scientific measurement) against the social value element relating to VFM, this is broken down into four components:

Social and economic benefits

- To individuals and communities

Service Quality

- Consumer benefits to paying customers

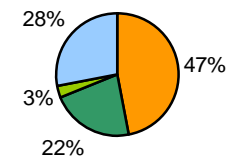
Environmental Benefits

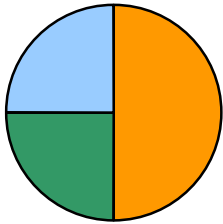
- Quality of neighbourhood; bio-diversity; energy efficiency; etc.

Financial Benefits

- A return (surplus) for reinvestment
- Knock-on benefits to other local services and taxpayer

Overview of social value



P1 Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 [Cfwd]					
Prime Objective:	To work with Cambridge City Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership to draft a joint Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy				
Outputs / Business Benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up joint working group with Cambridge City Council • Agree timeline and scope of Housing Strategy • Arrange series of workshops as part of consultation on key themes • Draft Housing Strategy for consultation • Publish new joint Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 				
Timescales	Start Date: [Cfwd]	End Date: July 2018	Project Duration: 12-24 months	Project Score: 22 Medium	Corporate Aim(s): A - 4, 5 B - 3, 4, 5
VFM – Social Value Social and Economic Benefits Service Quality Environmental Benefits Financial Benefits		50%	Strategic direction for affordable housing.		
		25%	Our ability to provide good quality services that meet the needs of the District will be identified within the Strategy		
		0%			
		25%	Affordability for housing will be a key focus for the Housing Strategy.		
Mitigating Risk:	The Housing Strategy will identify the key risks and opportunities facing Affordable Homes following changes in Government Policy BP7 - Government Policy Changes				
Additional Resources:	None				

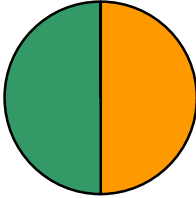
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P2 Community impact & community safety						
Prime Objective:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Communal Room Review • Health & safety internal review (HRA) 				
Outputs / Business Benefits:		<p><u>Implementation of Communal Room Review</u> There are 41 sheltered housing communal rooms with a range of facilities such as lounges, kitchens, laundries, office space, toilets, and a few guest rooms. They all require maintenance and expense yet they are under-utilised on the whole although some schemes do use them on a regular basis. On the whole they are an asset yet an under-utilised resource for the Council and surrounding communities. In order to manage the communal rooms as an asset it is vital that their investment needs as a structure are known and that their potential role in the community, as well as use by residents is established. From this platform the potential future of the communal rooms can be established</p> <p><u>Health & safety internal review (HRA)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of Asset & Compliance Manager • Complete review of policy & procedures for health & safety, primarily around fire safety by March 2019. • Asset Management Strategy reviewed by March 2019 				
Timescales		Start Date: April 2018	End Date: March 2020	Project Duration: 2 years	Project Score: 28 Medium	Corporate Aim(s): B – 4, 5
VFM – Social Value			25%	Our ability to review social / community hubs to combat loneliness		
Social and Economic Benefits			35%	Potential to improve existing communal rooms and compliance with Health & Safety requirements. AH204 (% tenant satisfaction with responsive repairs) and AH211 (Average re-let days)		
Service Quality			0%			
Environmental Benefits			40%	Potential opportunity to create increased accommodation units		
Financial Benefits						
Mitigating Risk:		STR9 - HRA Business Plan; HS4 - HRA Business Plan;				
Additional Resources:		A project Officer to take forward the review. 1 or 2 days per week are estimated to be required Recruitment of Asset & Compliance Manager				

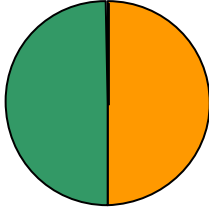
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P3 Homelessness Mitigation						
Prime Objective:		To ensure the Council understands and monitors the risks of increasing homelessness following policy changes in welfare reform, the spending review, Housing and Planning Act and the Homeless Reduction Act				
Outputs / Business Benefits:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act, including an increase in staffing, staff/ member training and review of procedures. • Work with partners as part of the Trailblazer bid. • Review of homelessness in the district and agree an action plan from this, covering temporary accommodation, homelessness prevention options. • Publish a new homeless strategy • Monitor impact of recent welfare reforms and those planned for the future in terms of impact on the service including impact on supported accommodation such as homeless hostels, following changes to social rents. • Increase the number of properties under the Shire Homes Lettings PSL scheme 				
Timescales		Start Date: [Cwfd]	End Date: June 2019	Project Duration: >18 months	Project Score: 31 Major	Corporate Aim(s): A - 5
VFM – Social Value			30%	To ensure the most vulnerable residents are supported to avoid homelessness wherever possible KPIs: Households in temporary accommodation, number of households helped to prevent homelessness		
Social and Economic Benefits			30%	Providing a service targeted at assisting those most vulnerable who are faced with homelessness		
Service Quality			0%	N/A		
Environmental Benefits			40%	To ensure the impacts of policy changes do not have an adverse affect on the general fund in the requirement to house those assessed as homeless in bed & breakfast accommodation. KPI: Bed and Breakfast costs		
Financial Benefits						
Mitigating Risk:		STR5 – Welfare Reform; STR10 – Increase in cost of managing homelessness; HS1 – Increase in cost of maintaining homelessness; HS6 - MAPPA & MARAC; HS7 Mental Health Issues				
Additional Resources:		Potential for increased staff resources if homelessness increases significantly due to impact of new policies or legislation				


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P4 Housing & Planning Policy Review and Updates					
Prime Objective:	To have up to date policies in relation to housing following the adoption of the Local Plan and Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy				
Outputs / Business Benefits:	Working closely with Planning Policy on the following policies/strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Affordable Housing SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) • Standardising format for S.106 Agreements in terms of affordable housing • New SPD on Self Build/Custom Build • Greater Cambridge Self Build Growth Strategy (new) • Community-led development Strategy (new) • Review Empty Homes Strategy 				
Timescales	Start Date: Feb 2018	End Date: March 2019	Project Duration: 12-24 months	Project Score: 25 Medium	Corporate Aim(s): A - 4 B – 3, 4
SFM – Social Value		50%	Providing a clear strategic direction for housing.		
Social & Economic Benefits		50%	Our ability to provide good quality services that meet the needs of the District will be identified through the strategies, which will be enforced through robust and clear policy direction. This will enable residents, developers and key stakeholders to understand the Council's objectives, how these will be implemented, providing clear guidance where necessary.		
Service Quality		0%			
Environmental Benefits		0%			
Financial Benefits					
Mitigating Risk:	To ensure we are compliant with relevant legislation and have the policies in place to deliver the Council's objectives for housing. STR3 - Failure to meet Housing Need; STR9 - HRA Business Plan; HS4 - HRA Business Plan; HS5 - New Build Strategy; BP7 - Government Policy Changes; BP10 - New Build				
Additional Resources:	None				

P5 Greater Cambridge Partnership Housing Investment Plan					
Prime Objective:	Work with Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) to provide detail for 10-50 million investment proposal for key worker housing				
Outputs / Business Benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful business case to DCLG Dec 2018 • Identification of delivery partners and land opportunities 				
Timescales	Start Date: April 2018	End Date: March 2019	Project Duration: 1 year	Project Score: 43 Major	Corporate Aim(s): B-3
VFM – Social Value		60%	Providing additional keyworker housing that is affordable to a targeted workforce that will support local economic growth.		
Social & Economic Benefits		0%			
Service Quality		20%	Provide homes nearer to people’s work to reduce travel		
Environmental Benefits		20%	Extra Council Tax; New Build Bonus and increased Business rates		
Financial Benefits					
Mitigating Risk:	STR3 - Failure to meet Housing Need; BP7 – Government Policy Changes				
Additional Resources:	Working with current SCDC and GCP resources				

P6 Options for new housing delivery					
Prime Objective:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to deliver council new build affordable homes using the development new build budget approved through the HRA Business Plan and MTFS. To comply with the new statutory requirement to promote self build and provide a self sustaining sub regional service, as well as maximising HRA assets where there is the potential for self build plots To begin a project to explore modular construction 				
Outputs / Business Benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pipeline of 106 Council homes identified in the pipeline up to 2021 (<i>budget-setting report identified a pipeline of 106 properties?</i>) Ensure that sufficient Right to Buy receipts are set against the new build spend to ensure no funds are returned to the Treasury as unspent by the rolling 3 year deadline Sale of first HRA owned permissioned plot, with 7 further permissioned plots to be marketed by Q1 2018 and further 10 plots at option appraisal or Pre App stage Self Build Development Officer in post start March 2018 Modular 'proof of concept' project underway STP. Funding for infrastructure secured from Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership EU bid underway for small pilot modular scheme for Temporary Accommodation on council land. EU funding as part of wider northern Europe bid to research benefits of modular. Capital funding 50/50 between SCDC and private investors Continue to promote and grant fund community led development, working in partnership with Cambridge City and CLT East 				
Timescales	Start Date: April 2018	End Date: Dec 2021	Project Duration: 3.5 years	Project Score: 30 Medium	Corporate Aim(s): B-3
VFM – Social Value		50%	Create new affordable housing. Increase funding for same with self build capital receipt Opportunity for those interested in self build to purchase 'ready to go' sites. Provision of additional housing supply		
Social & Economic Benefits		10%	Offering a basket of new housing options including affordable rent, shared ownership, shared equity (for downsizers), self build/custom build and community group builds		
Service Quality		10%	Opportunities for innovative design in sustainability and eco homes		
Environmental Benefits		30%	Ensure that sufficient Right to Buy receipts are set against the new build spend to ensure no funds are returned to the Treasury as unspent by the rolling 3 year deadline Ensure steady spend of commuted sums into new build programme to support shared equity products To realise a capital receipt from the sale of HRA land that can be used to improve current housing stock or provide additional affordable housing.		
Financial Benefits					
Mitigating Risk:	STR3 - Failure to meet Housing Need; STR9 - HRA Business Plan ; HS4 - HRA Business Plan; HS5 - New Build Strategy; BP6 - Right To Buy Sales; BP7 - Government Policy Changes; BP10 - New Build;				
Additional Resources:	Approved Self Build business case allows for the recruitment of a P/T Project Management Support Officer to maintain systems and curate and administrate the self build register(s). A programme of circa 200 new council new build homes across the next 3-4 years over a number of smaller sites requires an additional Development Project Officer or graduate trainee to ensure successful project management across a wide district. This will be the subject of a separate business case in Q2 2018/19				

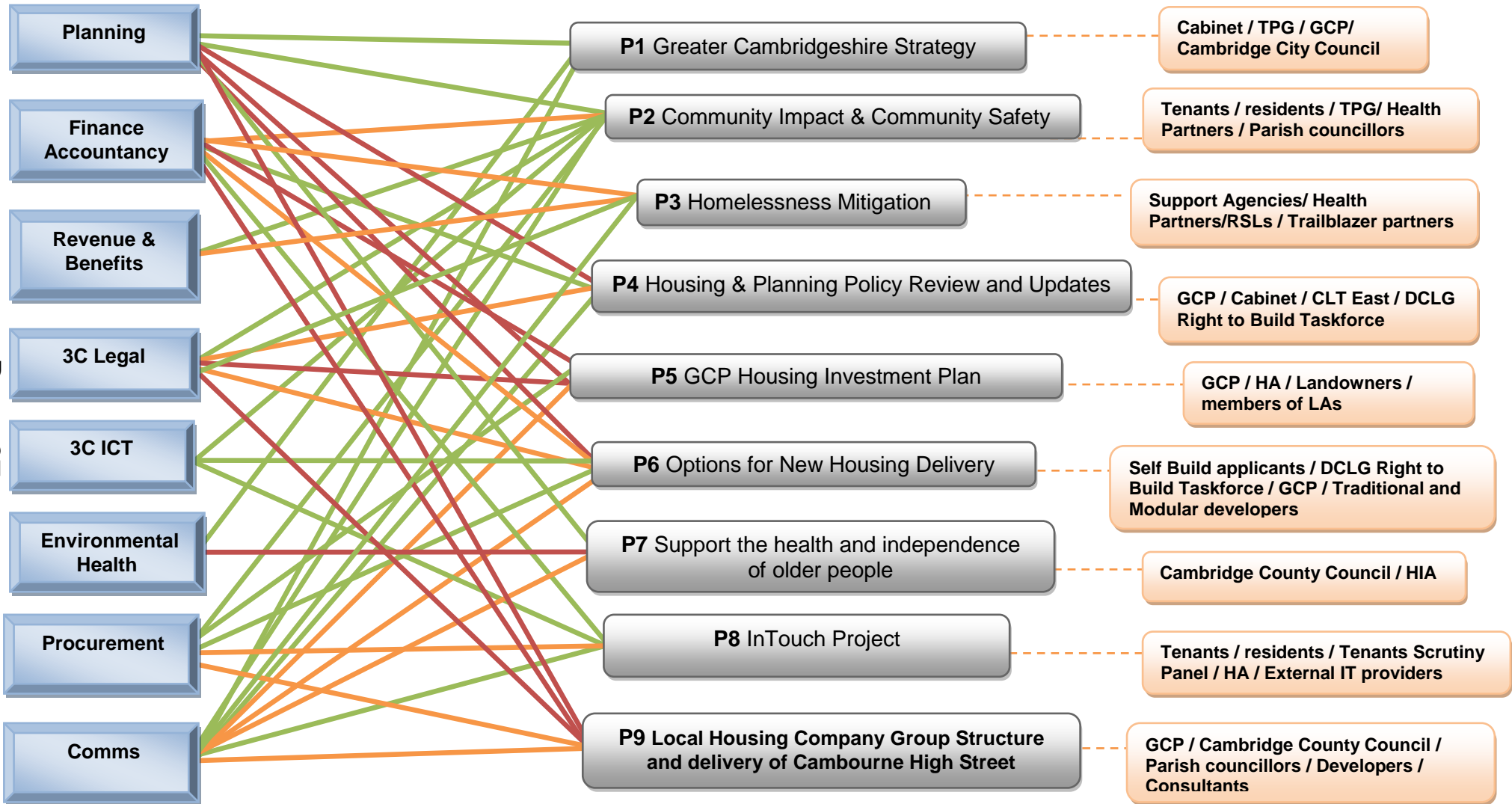
P7 Projects to support the health and independence of older people						
Prime Objective:		Making housing choices available that help to maintain the health and independence of older people				
Outputs / Business Benefits:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the Northstowe Healthy Towns research project on the older people’s housing, care and support needs in Greater Cambridge • Work with the County Council and other key stakeholders to publish an Older People’s Accommodation Strategy • Complete an Extra Care Position Statement by March 2019 • Publish a county-wide DFG Policy by July 2018 • Ensure that the floating visiting support service is sustainable for the future following revenue cuts • Complete County’s pilot of the Housing Options for Older People (HOOP) project within South Cambridgeshire • Ensure future sustainability and performance improvement of the HIA Shared Service 				
Page 8	Timescales	Start Date: April 2018	End Date: March 2019	Project Duration: 12 months	Project Score: 17 Small	Corporate Aim(s): B - 4
	VFM – Social Value		75%	Strategic direction for the provision of older people’s housing and continuation of preventative measures to ensure older people can remain healthy and independent		
	Social and Economic Benefits		25%	Improving the service quality in relation to the Home Improvement Agency and allocation of the DFG budget.		
	Service Quality		0%			
	Environmental Benefits		0%			
Financial Benefits						
Mitigating Risk:		STR6 - Demands on services from an ageing population; STR7- Partnership Working with Cambridgeshire County Council				
Additional Resources:		Any additional resource already identified within budgets or through external funding.				

P8 InTouch Project					
Prime Objective:	To take forward the Digital Inclusion Strategy within Housing Services. The strategy will be reviewed and relaunched as a campaign to run for a year with a dedicated project team. The team will work with colleagues across the Council to ensure that it dovetails with corporate work and initiatives. The project will link intrinsically with financial inclusion, communications and loneliness. The Tenants Scrutiny Review team are starting a review of the communications that are sent out to residents. The work from this team will feed into the In-Touch (IT) project. The project team will seek to work with appropriate external agencies such as housing associations and external providers with IT communication solutions.				
Outputs / Business Benefits:	Increased digital communication from residents. Greater connectivity that tackles financial inclusion and loneliness				
Timescales	Start Date: April 2018	End Date: March 2019	Project Duration: 12 months	Project Score: 20 Small	Corporate Aim(s): D-1
PFM – Social Value		40%	Strategy to identify opportunities for tenants to improve on-line skills so that they can access better deals, etc. on-line. [measured through number of tenants supported with IT training and the number of digital champions enrolled]		
Social and Economic Benefits		20%	Residents will have a greater ability to influence housing policy and service delivery		
Service Quality		20%	Carbon footprints of the Council and residents will be reduced through being able to access housing services on line. [Increase in number of on-line transactions]		
Environmental Benefits		20%	Residents will be able to save money through improved on-line skills and opportunities. Number of on-line transactions should reduce number of direct enquiries and postal costs, etc.		
Financial Benefits					
Mitigating Risk:	Universal Credit will be rolled out in October 2018 which is a significant risk to the HRA Business Plan. STR9 - HRA Business Plan; STR11 - Business Improvement & Efficiency Programme; HS4 - HRA Business Plan				
Additional Resources:	Two members of staff will be dedicated to the project from existing resources. Resources will be required to be ring fenced from the existing Resident Involvement budget.				

P9 Local Housing Company Group Structure and delivery of Cambourne High Street					
Prime Objective:	To establish a Local Housing Company Group Structure in order to take forward development opportunities (outside of the Housing Revenue Account), such as Cambourne High Street to accelerate delivery of homes.				
Outputs / Business Benefits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group structure to be established by December 2018 subject to business case and Council approval. Work in partnership with developer and stakeholders to bring forward planning application for retail and residential units for Cambourne High Street by December 2018 Seek grant funding from the Greater Cambridge Partnership for infrastructure funding required to widen the High Street. 				
Timescales	Start Date: August 2017	End Date: March 2019	Project Duration: 24 months	Project Score: 35 - Major	Corporate Aim(s): B3, D-3
WFM – Social Value		60%	Ensuring Cambourne High Street is a vibrant centre to meet the needs of a growing community and that it provides a range of housing options for those priced out of the housing market.		
Social and Economic Benefits		0%			
Service Quality		0%			
Environmental Benefits		40%	Establishment of a Company Group Structure will ensure that the Council is able to accelerate the delivery of housing where opportunities arise, providing financial benefits through long term rental streams.		
Financial Benefits					
Mitigating Risk:	STR3 – Failure to meet Housing Need				
Additional Resources:	Additional resource identified within the Budget 2018/19 for a Housing Delivery & Innovations Manager Additional financial resource of £50k approved by Cabinet in February 2018 for feasibility and design work. Funding being sought from Greater Cambridge Partnership				

Inter-dependency Links & Resource Impact

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	Low Resource Impact		Medium Resource Impact		High Resource Impact
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Inter-dependency Links & Resource Impact

Key:

	Low Resource Impact		Medium Resource Impact		High Resource Impact	Blank	No Resource Impact
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N°.	Project Type	Planning	Finance Accountancy	Revenues & Benefits	3C Legal	3C ICT	Environmental Health	Procurement	Comms	Other	Partners	Other Stakeholders
P1	Greater Cambridgeshire Strategy 2018-2023 [Cwfd]	Consultee					Consultee		Publicise consultation	TPG Cabinet	Cambridge City Council GCP	
P2	Community Impact & Community Safety	Planning permission / Compliance with building regulations/	Approval	Service charges	Advice on communal room leases	Review of current system re data storage		Internal advice	Publication o outcome of review	Tenants, Residents TPG Parish Councillors	Health Partners	
P3	Homelessness Mitigation [Cwfd]		New burdens funding, flexible homelessness support grant/ TA costs & staff increase budget	Homelessness prevention and Welfare Reform	Potential challenges for discussions made under new regulations				National publication re new Act		Health Partners Trailblazer partners	Support Agencies/ RSLs
P4	Housing & Planning Policy Review and Updates	Mainly planning led establish working group	Support/advice in developing any financial implications for policy		Consultee to draft policies				Publicise new policies		GCP / Cabinet	CLT East / DCLG Right to Build Taskforce
P5	Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership Housing Investment Plan	Land / building opportunities	Investment programme / Business Plan		Legal advice			Developers	Publication of outcome		GCP	HA / Landowners / members of LAs
P6	Options for New Housing Delivery	Impact on staff resources for pre app advice for new developments	Verification on financial appraisal & budget monitoring		Legal advice re modular / self build schemes	Implementatio n of self build register		Developers	Publicise modular demonstration units Completion / progress of schemes		GCP	Self Build applicants / DCLG Right to Build Taskforce / Traditional and Modular developers
P7	Projects to support the health and independence of older people	Consultee					Strong links for Health & wellbeing projects		Publication re research project		Cambridge County Council	
P8	InTouch Project		Advice & Support			Advice & Support		External IT providers	Publication of outcome	Tenant Scrutiny Panel / Tenants / Residents		Housing Associations / External IT providers
P9	Local Housing Company Group Structure and delivery of Cambourne High Street	Planning permission	Advice & Support			Advice & Support		Advice & Support	Publication of outcome / feasibility	Parish Councillors	GCP / Cambridge County Council	Developer / Consultant

Project/Activity Plan – Milestones

N°.	Project Type	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018	Aug 2018	Sept 2018	Oct 2018	Nov 2018	Dec 2018	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	March 2019	Carried Fwd.
P1	Greater Cambridgeshire Strategy 2018-2023 [Cwfd]													
P2	Community Impact & Community Safety													
P3	Homelessness Mitigation [Cwfd]													
P4	Housing & Planning Policy Review and Updates													
P5	Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership Housing Investment Plan													
P6	Options for New Housing Delivery													
P7	Projects to support the health and independence of older people													
P8	InTouch Project													
P9	Local Housing Company Group Structure and delivery of Cambourne High Street													

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

20 March 2018

Council Right to Build Vanguard work update

Purpose

1. This report is an end of year update on the Council's activity as a Right to Build Vanguard; in addition to its associated activity identifying and bringing land forward for self and custom build through the planning process and onward sale of identified HRA plots; with receipt from plot sales supporting the new build development programme.

Key Decision

2. This is not a key decision

Recommendations

3. It is recommended the Portfolio Holder for Housing notes the contents of this report.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The report update shows progress against the Business Plan initially approved in concept by Cabinet in July 2016 and thereafter confirmed as a costed business plan by EMT in June 2017. 2017 representing Year 1 of the work to bring forward HRA owned plots for sale.

Background

5. SCDC is a Right to Build Vanguard authority – one of 11 in the UK chosen by the Government to help promote self and custom build nationally. "Right to Build" is the blanket term used by the Government and DCLG to cover the new focus and promotion of self build and custom build.
6. Via the Self & Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 and the Housing & Planning Act 2016 each local authority has a statutory duty to:
 - Hold a register of applicants for self build
 - Promote that register
 - Provide sufficient planning permissions to meet demand (where demand is demonstrated by the numbers on the Register)
7. More generally, in a high demand area such as ours a combination of Planning policy and work around growth sites to bring more self build plots forward is required to begin to address these requirements.

8. The Self Build 'function' at SCDC began in Planning but has been sat in the Housing Strategy Section of Affordable Homes since 2016. Affordable Homes has now employed a Self & Custom Build Regional Manager sat under Head of Development (New Build) who focusses on providing support and advice to self build applicants, seeking land opportunities within the HRA assets as well as with SME developers and landowners across the District. In addition the post has a regional focus, bringing best practice together across the east and hosting events for self builders and other councils.
9. Our work as a Right to Build Vanguard has 2 distinct strands being HRA plot sales (circa 100 plots identified) and a regional roll out of stakeholder and council engagement.
10. The DCLG has provided a nominal 'burden grant' to fund the administration of the self build registers but this is insufficient at circa £15k per annum to finance our wider aspirations; therefore the most recent business case clearly set out a means using internal fee of ensuring that our overall function is entirely self sustaining. We take a 'fee' per self build plot brought to market and this ensures longevity of function. In addition, to front fund the work required in terms of surveys, planning, demolition or decontamination to bring a plot to market we established a "rolling fund" of £150,000 to cover those costs to kick start our programme of HRA plot sales.

Considerations

Register

11. In line with legislation we hold, run and promote our self build register. Currently it has nearly 819 applicants on it, all keen to build a home via the self build or custom build route.
12. This register is currently a joint register with Cambridge City Council. The legislation allows each council to use a two tier register and focus initially on those applicants that live in the district. It should be noted, however, that self build registers are required to allow applicants from anywhere within England to register on them.
13. The Council's Affordable Homes team are bringing HRA plots to market, but it is acknowledged that this is not the main solution to the new responsibilities to promote self and custom build and provide suitable planning permissions that is now enshrined in the recent legislation.
14. The solution to accelerating growth in the provision of land for self and custom build primarily sits within the remit of the Planning Authority and includes the following work already underway between Planning and Housing:
 - Robust Planning Policy – including a bespoke Self/Custom Build SPD – to ensure that planners have the tools to give due weight to the requirement to provide land for the purpose. Housing and Planning are working together on this in 2018.
 - A planning policy benchmark for self/custom build. For example some Local Authorities require 5% self build on schemes over a certain number of new homes – often 20 or 30.
 - Working with larger developers on major growth sites to ensure that self/custom build is part of the mix.

- Working with individual small-medium developers on individual sites across South Cambs DC to lever some self or custom build onto schemes.

Right to Build promotion – including regional work

15. To lead as a Right to Build Vanguard we have run a number of successful and well attended events and workshops for would be self builders, partners and stakeholders. Including CDM for self builders, a specific workshop covering modular housing for self builders and an event highlighting the Right to Build Task Force self Build Toolkit and a workshop with the DCLG as key speaker promoting the Governments focus on self build.
16. We have made useful links and forged relationships with the DCLG, National Custom and Self build Association (NaCSBA), Igloo, Potton, Building Control, and of key importance the Right to Build Task Force. This Taskforce is a Government funded body to bring together all aspects of the self and custom build market and promote and increase its leverage across England.
17. At the end of January 2018 we hosted a NaCSBA workshop to Discuss Implementation of the Right to Build with a focus on planning and we invited our City Council Planning colleagues along.
18. We plan to host an Eastern Region EXPO in Sept/Oct 2018 in partnership with NaCSBA/Right to Build Task Force.

HRA land audit and plot sales

19. We have audited our HRA land assets, and have identified over 100 potential land plots that could be brought to market for sale, subject to all appropriate surveys, Legal work and Planning.
20. The purpose is threefold.
 1. To bring land forward for our self build applicants
 2. To sell the plots at market value and reinvest in affordable housing
 3. To ensure additional funds to match fund our Right to Buy Receipts and Commuted Sum monies against
21. Our current self build plots are shown in **Appendix C**. This shows that there are 11 plots in total, with one sold, six with planning approval being marketed and four ready to go to planning committees in March and May 2018. Further plots are being brought through option appraisal and planning Pre App to ensure a rolling programme of plot sales.

Process and consultation

22. As we bring our first plots through planning, to market and through to sale we are honing a process and the current process is shown in the flow chart at **Appendix A**.

23. Issues that are known and covered to date include:

- Ensuring good communication and consultation with Parish Councils and Members
- Clear process around tree removal on sites
- Ensuring self builders can raise appropriate mortgage finance by prudent and limited use of restrictions on the plots for sale whilst ensuring build out as self build
- Initial marketing of all SCDC HRA owned plots to the applicant register
- Subsequent public marketing via an agent to market openly for a restricted time – this is a requirement of S123 of the Local Government Act and ensures that we can evidence that we have tested the market and have achieved best value. Further detail on this is found in **Appendix B** attached.

Planning Policy work

24. We are working with Planning on planning policy formation around self build applications. Locally we aim to collaborate to bring forward a Self Build Supplementary Planning Document to ensure appropriate weight is given to self build applications. The emerging Local Plan under H/8 has a clause covering self build and we can expand on this in an SPD. The NPPF also references self and custom build, and this has been in force since 2012. In addition and on a wider spectrum we aim to work with the Right to Build Task Force to bring forward an Accelerated Growth Strategy for Self and Custom Build in the Eastern Region and this work will commence post April 2018.

Identify plots on growth sites

25. In 2018 we intend to focus more on the gains from working with planners and major developers to lever self build plots onto larger sites and growth sites.

Working directly with SME developers

26. In 2018 we will continue our work with SME developers to bring exception or windfall sites forward that include a proportion of self build plots. We are at the start of this work.

Modular Construction

27. SCDC is working with a modular manufacturer to bring forward a 'proof of concept' MMC pilot for a high quality, energy efficient, and robust 2 bed home.

28. A detailed planning application has been made for temporary planning permission to erect this unit on land adjacent to South Cambridgeshire Hall Cambourne where it will be available (STP) for research and tours for up to 12 months.

29. Our main aim is to test the reality of assumed 'facts' around MMC such as - it is faster, it is cheaper, and it is sustainable.

30. Thereafter it will be moved to a site in a South Cambridgeshire village (subject to planning) where it will be sold on with profit reinvested into the General Fund. Our aim here is to prove MMC is portable and there is a market for it in the District.

31. We have brokered successful links between the modular manufacturer and Cambridge Regional College and it is hoped that CRC apprentices will be trained by the modular company and be part of the construction team. Should initial interest from the BBC bear fruit this might also be a project that gains film coverage; although this cannot be assumed.
32. In addition we are currently making a submission for EU funding to support research into sustainability of build and usage, plus a focus on financial models that could bring private finance into play for affordable housing. The aim is for a modular development on a larger council owned site that may (STP and funding) result in 6-8 modular 1 bed units as temporary accommodation for single homeless households in line with our Council statutory duty to provide.

Connections with Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership and the Combined Authority

33. We have successfully bid to the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership for infrastructure funding to help unlock our “proof of concept” modular pilot, and will use the £25,000 grant to ensure costs of surveys, planning, services, piling plus removal and re erection on another site are covered and then recycled out upon sale.
34. We continue to keep the Combined Authority updated on our aspirations and progress with modular construction and feed into their learning on this. We will continue to explore how we may utilise funding to accelerate self and custom build – for example explore a rolling fund possibly backed by the combined authority that might fund direct land purchase to accelerate self build.

Resources

35. As previously stated the business case 2017 demonstrated a self sustaining service based upon a Self build regional manager (F/T), a Self build development Officer (F/T) and a Project Management Support Officer (P/T).
36. Staff in post from 2016 to Feb 2018 were only the self build regional manager with support from the Head of Development (New Build) to whom they report
37. We have successfully recruited to the Self Build Development Officer who starts work in April 2018 and will be a resource wholly focussed upon bringing HRA plots to market in an efficient and measured way to ensure we hit our targets of an annual net income of around £1m - £1.5m from year 2 onwards.
38. The Part time support officer role is yet to be recruited – awaiting a new financial year.
39. Achievements to date have been supported by a temporary consultant 2 days per week and support from a housing strategy team member on an ad hoc basis.
40. To future proof our operation, and with particular reference to the ground breaking work being undertaken on modular construction we may well seek a fixed term contract post to ensure that area of business is sufficiently supported.

Options

41. The Housing Portfolio Holder may wish to request further information about the self build pipeline.

42. The Housing Portfolio Holder is asked to note this report as a progress update for Year 1 of operation.

Implications

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

Financial

44. The Right to Build Vanguard work is self sufficient and there are no significant financial implications on the HRA.

Legal

45. No significant implications

Staffing

46. We have successfully recruited to the Self Build Development Officer in Feb 2018.

Risk Management

47. Main risk is not being self sufficient – to mitigate this we will accelerate the plot sale programme as priority to ensure costs are covered. Should this arise other associated work would be impacted but could be accommodated

Equality and Diversity

48. No equality and diversity implications

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

49. None

Effect on Strategic Aims

Corporate Aim 2

Homes for our future: Secure the delivery of a wide range of housing to meet the needs of existing and future communities.

Increase the range of housing and tenure options for residents.
Households have a broader choice of housing in South Cambridgeshire.
Innovative and viable new housing options identified

Corporate Aim 4

An innovative and dynamic organisation: Adopt a more commercial and business-like approach to ensure we can continue to deliver the best possible services at the lowest possible cost

Commercial activities deliver service enhancements and income surpluses for the Council.

Background Papers

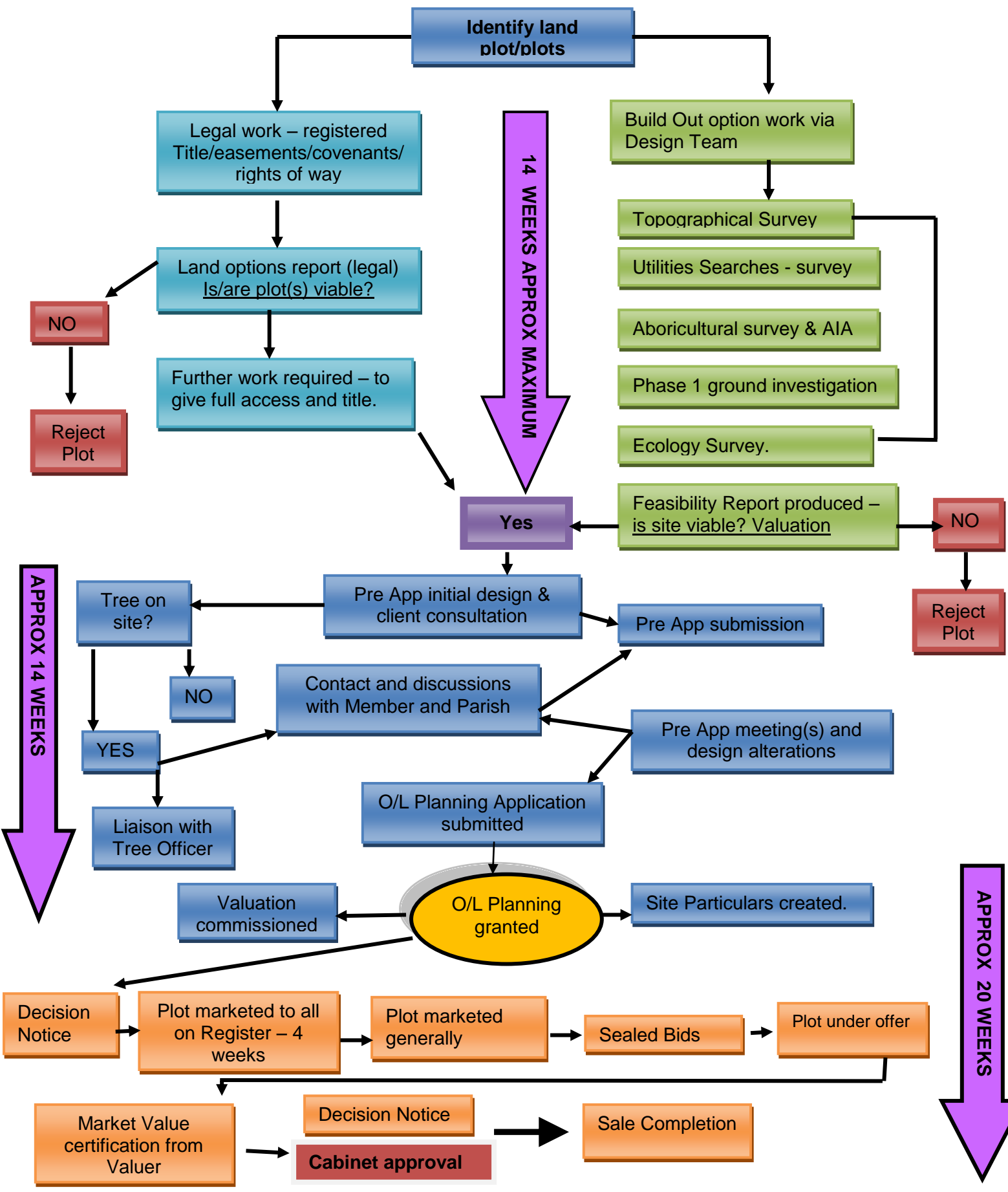
HRA Asset Sustainability Policy (Disposals and Acquisitions) – September 2013
Self Build Business Case June 2017

Report Author: Gill Anderton – Head of Development (New Build)
Laurence Castle – Self Build Regional Manager
Telephone: (01954) 713377

Appendix A Self Build process Flow Chart
Appendix B Carter Jonas marketing/principles of valuation letter
Appendix C Confidential – Current SCDC HRA owned plots in process

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DRAFT V1 – FLOW CHART FOR SELF BUILD PLOTS – INITIAL ENQUIRIES TO O/L APPLICATION



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Gill Anderton
Head of Development (New Build)
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

20 September 2017

Dear Gill

MARKETING OF CUSTOM AND SELF BUILD OPPORTUNITIES

I refer to our recent discussion concerning the above and in particular the requirement placed upon Local Authorities to adhere to **S123 of the Local Govt Act 1972** which seeks to ensure that public assets, ie residential building plots, are disposed of at best price (Market Value) to safeguard the tax payers interests and prevent any possible Judicial Challenge.

The RICS '**Red Book**' definition of Market Value is as follows:

"The estimated amount for which an asset or liability should exchange on the valuation date between a willing buyer and willing seller in an arm's length transaction after proper marketing when the parties have acted knowledgeably prudently and without compulsion".

The relevant section from S123 of the Local Government Act appears below:

" Disposal of land by principal councils".

(1) Subject to the following provisions of this section, a principal council may dispose of land held by them in any manner they wish.

(2) Except with the consent of the Secretary of State, a council **shall not dispose of land** under this section, otherwise than by way of a short tenancy, **for a consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained**

The legislation has been reinforced in recent years through the publication of HM Treasury guidelines: "**Managing Public Money**" published in July 2013.

The foreword from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury specifically states that:

" Integrity is the common thread. Transparency and value for public money are the essential results".

Within the guidance the relevant and pertinent section is contained within **Annex 4.15 - Asset management:**

"Paragraph - A4.15.14 Public sector organisations should take professional advice when disposing of land and property assets.- Protocol for disposal of land, property and other assets:

- **Value assets at market prices** using Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' Red Book (www.rics.org).
- Dispose of surplus land property within three years.
- Dispose of surplus residential property within six months.
- Sell plant, machinery, office equipment, furniture and consumable stores by public auction as seen; or by open tender. Obtain payment before releasing the goods.
- If an asset is sold or leased at a loss, the proceeds forgone (compared to market value) should be treated as a gift, and the routine in annex 4.12 should be followed."

I hope it is apparent therefore that it is incumbent upon Local Authorities to take professional advice when dealing with the sale of public assets but moreover that in order to demonstrate 'Market Value' appropriate and transparent marketing needs to have taken place, notwithstanding that a Local Authority list of interested parties may exist.

Its purpose is two fold in that the 'Market' will then determine the appropriate value of an asset, against which to adjudge any offers and equally the ability of any disgruntled party to frustrate the process of sale through a Judicial challenge is mitigated for accordingly.

I hope the above is helpful in clarifying your obligations, which I am sure your own Treasury and Accountancy teams will be familiar with.

Yours sincerely



Richard Combes
Associated Partner

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Copy to: Laurence Castle - Self and Custom Build Regional Manager.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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