



8 April 2024

To: The Leader – Councillor
Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Councillor Brian Milnes
Members of the Cabinet – Councillors Bridget Smith, Henry Batchelor,
John Batchelor, Bill Handley, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Peter McDonald and
John Williams

Quorum: Three, including the Leader or Deputy Leader

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Cabinet**, which will be held in the **Council Chamber - South Cambs Hall** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **Tuesday, 16 April 2024 at 10.00 a.m.**

Yours faithfully
Liz Watts
Chief Executive

Agenda

Pages

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
To receive apologies for absence from Cabinet members.
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
To receive declarations of interest from Cabinet Members.
- 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**
To authorise the Leader to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2024 as a true and accurate record. **3 - 16**
- 4. Announcements**
- 5. Public Questions**
If you would like to ask a question or make a statement, then please refer to the
[Document called Public Speaking Scheme \(Physical Meetings\)](#)
and contact Democratic Services by no later than 11.59pm on 10 April 2024.
- 6. Update from Scrutiny and Overview Committee** **17 - 18**

7.	Peer Review Action Plan	19 - 30
8.	Proposed Administration of the Northstowe Community Activation Grant Fund on Behalf of Homes England, Criteria and Award Process	31 - 38
9.	Low-income Family Tracker (LIFT)	39 - 46
10.	Homes for Ukraine – Landlord Incentive Scheme Revision	47 - 62
11.	Exclusion of Press and Public The press and public are likely to be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the appendices to the following items in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act). Paragraph 3 relates to information about the financial or business affairs of any person, including the Authority holding that information.	
12.	Acquisition of 33no. Affordable Homes, Cottenham (Key)	63 - 70
13.	Acquisition of 45no. Affordable Homes, Barrington (Key)	71 - 78

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Councillors are reminded that Democratic Services must be advised of substitutions in advance of meetings. It is not possible to accept a substitute once the meeting has started.

Agenda Item 3

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Tuesday, 12 March 2024 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT:

Cabinet Members in attendance:

Bridget Smith	Leader of Council
Brian Milnes	Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Cabinet Member for Environment
Henry Batchelor	Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing
Bill Handley	Lead Cabinet Member for Communities
John Williams	Lead Cabinet Member for Resources
John Batchelor	Lead Cabinet Member for Housing
Tumi Hawkins	Lead Cabinet Member for Planning
Peter McDonald	Lead Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Liz Watts	Chief Executive
John Murphy	Monitoring Officer
Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
Anne Ainsworth	Chief Operating Officer
Bode Esan	Head of Climate, Environment and Waste
Jeff Membery	Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services
Pippa Turvey	Democratic Services Team Leader
Laurence Damary- Homan	Democratic Services Officer
Emma Dyer	Development Officer
Sue Carter	Service Manager – Housing Advice and Options
Duncan Vessey	Head of Ermine Street Housing
Gareth Bell	Communications and Communities Service Manager
Caroline Hunt	Strategic Planning Manager
Terry De Sousa	Planning Policy and Strategy Team Leader
Linda Gallagher	Development Officer
Orla Gibbons	Project Officer
Alex Snelling-Day	Strategic Climate Change and Sustainability Manager
Kevin Ledger	Senior Policy and Performance Officer
Jonathan Dixon	Planning Policy Manager
Lizzie Wood	Policy – Senior Planner
James Green	Political Assistant – Liberal Democrat
Daniel Sillett	Political Assistant – Conservative

Councillors Heather Williams and Lisa Redrup were also in attendance.

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence had been received.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Cabinet authorised the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 6 February 2024.

4. Announcements

The Leader of the Council announced that South Cambridgeshire District Council had won a Bronze Award at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards 2024 in the Efficiency and Effectiveness category for its four-day week trial. Councillor Smith attended the event along with Principal People Partner, Chloe Whitehead.

5. Public Questions

There were no public questions received.

6. Update from Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Cabinet noted the Scrutiny and Overview report summarising the meeting held on 15 February 2024.

7. Update on the Four-Day Week Trial

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, he explained that the original intent when beginning the four-day week trial was to be considering the results of the trial shortly, with Full Council making a final decision on whether to adopt a four-day week in the Summer. This was no longer the case, as the Government had announced its intention to introduce financial penalties for authorities working under such arrangements. As it was felt that the Council could not properly consult on the introduction of a four-day week without including details of any financial implications, any final decision would need to wait until full details of any penalties were understood and included in a consultation. Councillor Williams further advised that a report would still be brought to Full Council in the Summer setting out the results of the trial.

It was commented that the purpose of the trial was to consider KPI performance, the health and wellbeing of staff, the number of applicants to advertised positions,

retention levels, and savings. It was not an aim of the trial to save £1 million, which was an estimated figure of the cost of the Council's hard to fill posts.

Finally, it was noted that the proposals included the harmonisation of working arrangements between waste services and desk-based staff to 32 hours per week.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Smith. Councillor Smith noted that full time was generally considered to be 35 hours, so the Council would be just short of this.

In response to questions from non-Cabinet Members, the following points were raised:

- It was advised that four waste collection vehicles had been purchased. Two of these were specifically due to the four-day week trial, however the other two were required to address growth generally.
- Recruitment and retention incentives had been stopped within the waste service in September 2023. These had been specifically to address the challenge of recruiting licensed drivers after the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, the end of these incentives had not affected recruitment levels.
- Members were advised that market factor supplements were used in some services in addition to the salary scheme and was a way of recognising when a particular job market was challenging. If the market were to change, these could be reimplemented for other service areas.
- Comment was made in relation to the comparison of cost of agency workers and Council staff. It was noted that real costs were being compared, with agenda workers still operating five days a week.
- Regarding sickness reporting, it was acknowledged that sickness on non-working days were not being recorded. It was commented, however, that the sickness recorded was only that which was disrupting work.
- It was advised that nine out of ten of the originally identified hard to fill posts had been in the planning services, which was split 65/35 between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council due to work around the local plan. This meant that savings from these posts were around £220,000 to £230,000.
- Members noted that other hard to fill posts had since been identified and filled since those originally set out when the trial began.
- It was commented that efforts had been made to fit the four-day week for the waste service into 30 hours, however it became apparent that 32 hours would be needed.
- It was noted that during discussions at the Scrutiny and Overview Committee in April 2023 it was acknowledged that the waste service and desk-based workers hours needed to be level.
- Members were advised that 'golden handcuffs' (a financial incentive to discourage new recruits from leaving) were available for use under the current evaluations scheme. Officers would confirm when the Council had begun using them.

Resolution

Cabinet:

- a) Agreed to continue with four-day week working arrangements for desk-based colleagues (pro rata for part time colleagues) until: (i) information was provided by the Government regarding potential future financial levers they might impose on Councils using this working practice, as announced in their Local Government Financial Settlement consultation in December 2023, and (ii) a subsequent consultation was carried out by the Council, analysed, and all trial data was presented to Full Council for a final decision.
- b) Agreed to continue with four-day week working arrangements for the Waste service operational colleagues (the crews) (pro rata for part time colleagues) until: (i) information was provided by the Government regarding potential future financial levers they might impose on Councils using this working practice, as announced in their Local Government Financial Settlement consultation in December 2023, and (ii) a subsequent consultation was carried out by the Council, analysed, and all trial data was presented to Full Council for a final decision, noting that with a seasonal service, ideally a full year's data was required.
- c) Agreed to undertake a consultation on the four-day week, once the financial implications of the Government's Local Government Financial Settlement consultation were confirmed and all implications of considering adoption of a four-day week permanently were understood.
- d) Agreed that, for all colleagues working a four-day week (desk-based and waste operations), the hours were harmonised at 32 hours per week (pro rata for part time colleagues) at 86.5% of contracted hours from 1 April 2024.
- e) Noted that the proposal to approve a continuation of a four-day week (pro rata for part time) working model for waste and desk-based colleagues post the end of March 2024, would also be brought to the Strategy and Resources Committee at Cambridge City Council on 25 March 2024, and that both Councils were required to support the decision for the services which were shared (Waste and Planning).
- f) Agreed that an update report to Employment & Staffing Committee, Cabinet and Full Council and Cambridge City council committees, no later than the end of July 2024, would provide data on the trial periods (desk-based and waste), up until the end of March 2024, and information about the ongoing effectiveness, including recruitment and retention, costs and savings of a four-day week working model.

Options Considered

As set out in the report.

Reasons for Decision

As set out in the report.

8. 2023-24 Quarter Three Performance Report

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Williams noted that KPI's were one method of measuring performance, though which the Council had seen consistent improvement.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Handley.

Resolution

Cabinet:

- a) Noted the KPI results and comments at Appendix A and progress against Business Plan actions at the draft Appendix B.

Options Considered

No other options were considered.

Reasons for Decision

The decision was required to enable management and members to understand the organisation's performance. The information included within performance reports contributed to the evidence base for the ongoing review of priorities and enables, where appropriate, redirection of resources to reflect emerging priorities and address areas of concern.

9. Lifeline Service (Dispersed Scheme) and the Financial Impact of the Digital Changeover

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Batchelor advised that to move the Lifeline Service to a digital platform would be costly and, as such, unviable. It was appreciated that some residents were dependent on the service and, therefore, the Council wished to provide as much support to residents in arranging a new supplier as possible. It was further advised that the Council's own sheltered housing is not included in the Lifeline Service and a similar service would be maintained for all sheltered housing tenants.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Handley.

Cabinet Members raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- Following resolution from Cabinet, officers would be contacting customers advising them of the service end.

- There would be a three month period where officers would be available to provide support to residents.

Resolution

Cabinet:

1. Approved the recommendation that the Council bring the Dispersed Lifeline service to an end.
2. Agreed that the proposed increase to the fees for 2024/25, as agreed in the Cabinet report from 5th December 2023, are not activated so that colleagues could focus on assisting customers to find an alternative supplier.
3. Agreed a three-month notice period for bringing the service to an end, so that the Council's customers had sufficient time to find another service and the Council could offer help and assistance where needed.

Options Considered

As set out in the report.

Reasons for Decision

As set out in the report.

10.Homelessness Strategy

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Batchelor advised that the Homelessness Strategy was required to be reviewed on a regular basis, which had been done following a consultation process.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Hawkins. Councillor Hawkins commented that she was particularly keen to see improvement in housing options for single people.

Cabinet Members raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- Members noted that homelessness figures were increasing nationally, and focus should be placed on early intervention.

Non-Cabinet Members raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- Attention was drawn to a particular situation where an individual presented as homeless as they were not able to use the stairs in their previous home, and no suitable accommodation was immediately available to them.

Resolution

Cabinet:

1. Approved the new Homelessness Strategy 2023-2028.
2. Authorised the Lead Member for Housing to approve minor changes to this policy to correct errors, to provide more clarity and to reflect future changes in legislation, guidance or case law.

Options Considered

No other options were considered.

Reasons for Decision

The draft Homelessness Strategy included a homelessness review of the district identifying the main issues leading to housing need. From these, priorities for the next five-year strategy were outlined.

11. Amendments to the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Criteria

Councillor Henry Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Batchelor advised that the amendments proposed were straightforward. The criteria for grants required review in order to maintain fairness in the face of increased levels of applications.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Williams.

Resolution

Cabinet approved the proposed amendments to the guidance, to come into effect for the 2024-2025 grant cycle.

Options Considered

To reject the proposed amendments to the guidance, or to propose alternative or supplementary amendments to the guidance.

Reasons for Decision

The clarifications had been proposed in response to the annual review of the officer panel scoring process, and comments made by the Grants Advisory Committee at the presentation of the 2023-2024 applications at the July 2023 committee.

The Climate and Environment Advisory Committee had the opportunity to review the proposed changes and support them.

The Grants Advisory Committee had the opportunity to review the proposed changes and recommended to the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources that these changes were approved.

12. Increasing Protections for the High Street ATM's (Automated Teller Machines)

Councillor Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Handley advised that attacks on ATMs in villages were common, impacting both businesses and residents. One common method was ram-raiding, which could be discouraged via the use of anti-ram bollards to stop close contact. It was noted that one site had been confirmed for such measures, with delegation proposed to the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services to approve additional locations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor McDonald. Councillor McDonald advised that the Council was keen to work with communities, police and local farmers to address this issue, as the theft of farm vehicles was often involved.

Resolution

Cabinet agreed:

- a) To progress work, from 1 April 2024, to protect the ATM identified at the Co-op in School Lane, Cambourne.
- b) To delegate to the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Communities, decisions to proceed with increasing protection to ATM following assessment of additional sites within the approved £100,000 budget, ensuring local district councillors and parish/town councils have been engaged.

Options Considered

- Agree to progress the recommended Co-op site in Cambourne identified in the first tranche of 14 vulnerable ATMs.
- Delay a decision on the recommended Co-op site in Cambourne and ask officers for more information before making a decision.
- Agree to delegate to the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Communities, decisions to proceed with ATM target hardening work following assessment of additional sites within the approved £100,000 budget.
- Decide to end the project at the investigation phase and return the entire £100,000 to the South Cambridgeshire District Council's SPF funding co-ordinator for use on other programme projects.

Reasons for Decision

The research, site assessments and consultation with elected members, businesses and parish/town councils about this project had already been extensive. Many of the original 14 sites were not suitable for the installation of heavy-duty planters for a range of reasons (including available space, land ownership, business preference) but it was hoped that delivery at the Cambourne location may help others in the second tranche of sites assess whether the installation of planters would be a good option for their ATM.

The list of potential sites would be kept under review to ensure as many locations as possible were assessed and progressed during the 2024-25 period. If necessary, any unallocated funds would be returned to the District Council's SPF programme coordinator for use on other projects in South Cambridgeshire.

The second tranche of sites would be assessed using the same criteria as the original 14 sites identified as higher priority by the police before a decision by the Head of Service in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member.

13. Mobile Warden Schemes - Additional Grant Funding to Support Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Schemes for 2024-25

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, he advised that mobile warden schemes were typically run by national organisations, such as Age UK, although the Council had supported local schemes run by parish councils. A review of schemes in place across the district was planned to determine efficiency. Age UK had informed the Council that funding for the scheme had been lost and the service would cease without financial support. This support was suggested for 12 months, with further consideration following the outcome of a review.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Handley.

Cabinet Members raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- It was noted that the Council was in regular contact with parish councils and would be encouraging contribution and involvement as part of the review.
- Members felt that those parish councils that ran such schemes were well managed.
- A final report would be received following the review that would set out the social return on investment of such schemes, learning from existing schemes, and best practice.

Non-Cabinet Members raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- Comment was made that it would be useful to understand how Age UK came to be in this position.

Resolution

Cabinet agreed a supplementary estimate of £100,000 to fund Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to provide continuity of service to the 11 South Cambridgeshire Mobile and Community Warden Schemes during 2024-25.

Options Considered

- Agree to fund Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with an additional £99,965 to provide continuity of service to the 11 South Cambridgeshire Mobile and Community Warden Schemes in 2024-25.
- Agree to allow Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to use the Council's previously approved £64,435 grant for 2024-25 to continue to deliver Mobile and Community Warden services to the areas they assess as most viable.
- Agree an alternative additional grant amount to Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, giving reasons, to provide continuity of service to named South Cambridgeshire Mobile and Community Warden Schemes in the 2024-25 period.
- Defer a decision ask officers for further specific information. This option would result in a likely disruption to services and potential staffing difficulties as Wardens have been placed at risk of redundancy.

Reasons for Decision

MCWS offer a lifeline to older residents in South Cambridgeshire and to their families and carers. It was well-known that there were benefits to keeping older people living independently in their own homes in the communities they know. MCWSs offered a relatively low-cost opportunity for some older people to maintain their independence; offering an opportunity for social contact, falls prevention, medication assessment, respite and relief for carers and families and, in some cases, the opportunity to expedite discharge from hospital which reduces bed-blocking. This resulted in improved health and wellbeing for residents and was likely to save greater costs in other parts of the health system. The review being carried out by Rose Regeneration was expected to provide more data to demonstrate the value-for-money of the schemes and make recommendations for how schemes can become more self-sustaining.

14. Greater Cambridge Plan-making Timetable

Councillor Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, she advised that the current timetable had been agreed in 2022 but was no longer accurate. The new timetable depended on four major factors: water supply, the transport strategy, the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant relocation, and the new national plan-making system.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Smith.

Cabinet Members raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- It was noted that no councils had been identified as frontrunners to pilot the new national plan-making system, though officers continued to raise South Cambridgeshire District Council's interest in this.
- There was no information available as to what would be involved in any pilot scheme, though it was recognised that a phased introduction of a new system would improve learning and avoid any bottlenecks resulting from the change.
- Members expressed disappointment regarding the uncertainty around the 'Cambridge 2040' proposal, which it was felt placed Greater Cambridge in a set of special circumstances.

Resolution

Cabinet agreed that:

- a) The Local Plan Timetable Update at Appendix 1 be added as an Addendum to the Greater Cambridge Development Scheme 2022 and published on the Greater Cambridge Planning website.
- b) the Lead Member for Planning at South Cambridgeshire District Council would write to DLUHC, together with the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure at Cambridge City Council, providing an update on the plan making timetable for Greater Cambridge reflecting the contents of this report.
- c) the Greater Cambridge local planning authorities should explore further with Government the opportunity to be a 'front-runner' pilot for the new plan-making process.
- d) a further report with a proposed specific timetable for both plans be brought to Members when there was clarity on the external dependencies of water, transport the WWTP DCO and the new plan-making system.

Options Considered

No other options were considered.

Reasons for Decision

Given the remaining uncertainties regarding key determinants for GCLP and NECAAP, it was only possible to confirm an indicative timetable for the GCLP process.

15. Statement of Community Involvement

Councillor Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Hawkins advised of a correction to recommendation (c), to apply to South Cambridgeshire District Council. It was noted that the Council was required to publish a statement of community involvement every five years. The SCI had been published for public consultation and, following feedback, had been finalised recommending adoption for both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Handley. Councillor Handley expressed his hope that communities engaging with the planning process would provide benefits to all.

Cabinet Members raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council required Equality Impact Assessments to be included within the SCI. Although this was not a national requirement, it was undertaken at every local authority level and Members considered to not do so would be to fail residents.

Resolution

Cabinet:

- a) Noted the main issues raised in the public consultation, agreed responses to the representations received and agreed proposed changes to the Statement of Community Involvement as set out in the Statement of Consultation (Appendix 1 to the report);
- b) Subject to (a), agreed to adopt the amended Greater Cambridge Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix 2 to the report); and
- c) Delegate to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning, the authority to make any necessary editing changes to the SCI prior to publication.

Options Considered

- Agree the Statement of Community Involvement as set out in Appendix 2 to the report without making any further amendments;
- Agree the Statement of Community Involvement as set out in Appendix 2 to the report and supporting documents, making further amendments; or
- Not agree the Statement of Community Involvement as set out in Appendix 2 to the report and supporting documents.

Reasons for Decision

The report presented the reviewed SCI for adoption following the conclusion of a six week period of public consultation. Whilst there was no mandatory requirement for consultation on a draft SCI, the Cabinet agreed at the meeting of 28 September 2023 that the draft SCI should be consulted on for a six week period to ensure that the needs and aspirations of our communities, partners and stakeholders were considered and taken into account in finalising the document. The public consultation on the draft reviewed SCI commenced on Wednesday 18 October 2023 and concluded on Wednesday 29 November 2023.

There were a total of 52 representations received during the consultation period from a total of 24 separate individuals or organisations. This was more than the representations received from the previous SCI consultation and was typical of a document of this nature. There was general support for the aims and approach of the draft SCI. The Statement of Consultation detailed the comments received,

and provided a summary of the main issues raised and how they had been taken into account.

16. 2023/2024 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring (Quarter 3)

Councillor Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Peter McDonald.

Resolution

Cabinet:

- (a) Noted the 2023/24 revenue position against the approved revenue budget to date shown in Appendix B to the report, the projected major variances with reasons for these variances at Appendices C1 to C7 to the report, and the action being taken to address the underlying issues.
- (b) Noted the latest Capital Programme 2023/24 position [and variances, if any] as shown in Appendix D to the report.

Options Considered

The report provided monitoring information to ensure awareness of budget trends and emerging budget issues.

Reasons for Decision

For Cabinet to be advised of the latest monitoring information in respect of the 2023/24 revenue and capital budgets and emerging budget issues, for the third quarter period to 31 December 2023. The comparison in the various appendices was against the revised estimate.

17. Review of the Ermine Street Housing Business Plan 2023- 2024 to 2032-2033

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, comment was made that Ermine Street Housing was a success story for the Council, contributing £4.6 million in revenue and £126 million worth of assets.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Williams. Councillor Williams identified that Ermine Street Housing supported the Council in its response to the housing crisis, and not just as an income generator.

Cabinet Members raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- Members thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its recommendations, particularly in relation to accounting and risk.

Resolution

Cabinet received, in their capacity as shareholder, the Ermine Street Business Plan for the period 2023/2024 to 2032/2033.

Options Considered

No other options were considered.

Reasons for Decision

The Council, as owner of the Company and sole shareholder, had an interest in reviewing the Business Plan to ensure that: (i) the Company was on target to achieve its objectives, (ii) to consider the past year's performance, and (iii) acknowledge the changes in the financial assumptions and the financial return to the Council resulting from the business activity.

**The Meeting ended at
11.34 a.m.**

Agenda Item 6



Report to: Cabinet 16 April 2024

Lead Cabinet Members: Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources

From: Councillor Graham Cone, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee
Councillor Stephen Drew, Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Update from Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Purpose

1. This report informs Cabinet about the outcome of discussion among members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at the meeting on 21 March 2024.

Peer Review Action Plan

2. Having reviewed the report and received responses to questions posed by Committee members, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee endorses the action plan shown in Appendix A to the Cabinet report and refers Cabinet to the Committee's recommendations set out in paragraphs 4 to 8 of this report.

Peer Review Recommendation 2 (Reset and define relationships at a local and regional level with key partners to support the delivery of business plan priorities)

3. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee endorses the action proposed by the Council and agrees with the Leader of the Council that the word 'reset' reflects a gap in the evidence gathered by the Peer Review Team.
4. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommends
 - (a) that the Cabinet should interpret the word 'reset' as meaning to 'take stock' and demonstrate how the Council's approach reflects its vision of nurturing its working relationship with Parish and Town Councils as well as other key partners.
 - (b) that in continuing to build effective relationships with key partners, a single Cabinet member together with a single Leadership Team officer would be more effective in identifying different but still measurable ways of enhancing partnership working.

- (c) that the Cabinet should explore options for capturing meaningful feedback from partners so that the Council can provide an evidence-based response to the Peer Review Team.

Peer Review Recommendation 3 (Finance)

5. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommends that in relation to 'accelerating the closure of outstanding accounts' a distinction be drawn between those measures that are achievable internally and the relationship with External Audit over whose work practices and timescales the Council has no control.

Peer Review Recommendation 12 (Effectiveness review of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee)

6. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommends that Cabinet notes the steps already taken in addressing this aspect, and the Committee's desire to relate its work programme more closely with those strategic risks most likely to affect the residents of South Cambridgeshire.

Table 2 in Appendix A to the Cabinet report

7. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommends that Cabinet identifies the most effective way of ensuring that the proposed residents survey is genuinely independent and asks questions that do not suggest what responses should be.

Recommendation B in paragraph 5 of the Cabinet report

8. In addition, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommends that Committee members be given an opportunity to review the draft progress report to the Peer Review Team in Autumn 2024 as well as the Peer Review Team's response.

Report Author:

Ian Senior – Scrutiny and Governance Adviser
Telephone – 01954 713028

Agenda Item 7



**South
Cambridgeshire**
District Council

Report to:	Cabinet on 16/04/2024
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cllr John Williams
Lead Officer:	Jeff Membery

Peer Review Action Plan

Executive Summary

1. The District Council has recently taken part in a Corporate Peer Challenge, which is run by the Local Government Association (LGA) and designed to provide robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support to councils. Typically, Councils have a peer review every five years and for South Cambridgeshire, our last peer review was of our Planning Committee in 2020.
2. The District Council invited the team of peers, made-up of councillors and officers from other councils, to visit us in late October / early November. They spoke with staff, councillors, and local partners, and their report has now been published which highlighted much good work being undertaken by the Council, and also made some recommendations for us to consider.
3. The action plan at Appendix 1 of this report identifies the actions the Council will take to respond to the recommendations made by the peer challenge team. It looks to take the opportunity to make further improvements in the way we work to deliver even more for our residents and businesses.

Key Decision

4. No

Recommendations

5. A - It is recommended that Cabinet approve the action plan in Appendix 1 of this report.
B - It is further recommended that Cabinet agrees that progress against this plan be reported alongside the quarterly Key Performance Indicators until complete.

Reasons for Recommendations

6. The peer review process requires that the Council considers the recommendations of the peer challenge team and responds with an action plan to deliver improvements in line with those recommendations. The action plan needs to be published and the peer challenge team will re-visit again in September 2024 to consider the Council's progress against that plan.

Details

7. In November 2023 South Cambridgeshire District Council welcomed a peer challenge team from the Local Government Association (LGA) to support us on our journey of continuous improvement. The full report can be accessed on our website. [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report \(scamb.gov.uk\)](https://scamb.gov.uk)
8. It was very helpful to have a team of experienced and knowledgeable peers look at and assess our progress, acknowledging the many things we do well, and also highlighting opportunities for us to sharpen our focus or further improve performance.
9. The Council would like to extend our thanks to the peer review team for the work they undertook with us.
10. Examples of the things the Council does well highlighted by the Peer Challenge team included; - the Council's cost of living response which it called "comprehensive" and "innovative", the Council's leadership on the green agenda, and a team culture where colleagues feel supported, have opportunities for learning and feel valued and recognised.
11. The team's report noted the investment in transformation that was already delivering measurable improvements and also commented that it was positive to see the range of activities that apprentices were undertaking in key teams across the Council.
12. The report also comments on the effectiveness of the committees in ensuring strong governance was in place and noted the benefits of pre-scrutiny in delivering timely decision making. It also praises recent work to examine how the Council can improve how it interacts with younger people.
13. The report particularly highlights the Council's strong financial position.
14. In line with their remit, the team made recommendations about where there were opportunities to further improve the way we work. The action plan at Appendix 1 has been prepared in response to these recommendations and it is proposed that progress against this plan should be reported alongside the quarterly performance reports to Scrutiny & Overview committee and Cabinet until the actions on the plan are fully delivered.

Options

1. The recommended option is for Cabinet to adopt the action plan in Appendix 1 in its entirety. This will both meet the objectives of the LGA Peer Review process and deliver improvements to residents.
2. Cabinet Could choose to reject the plan in its entirety. Although this would potentially reduce officer workload in the short term, it would also pass up opportunities for delivering improvements to residents and would potentially be contrary to the Council's Best Value duty.
3. Cabinet could adopt the plan in part accepting the proposed response to some recommendations and rejecting or amending the proposed response to others.

Implications

Equality and Diversity

15. Although this action plan does not have a direct impact on Equality and Diversity some of its elements – such as the production of the “People Strategy” potentially will have and Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken separately for those elements.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

16. By improving the delivery of a range of services – including those contained in the Corporate Business Plan – this action plan aligned with the Corporate Priority areas.

Background Papers

The Peer Review report which can be accessed online here [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report \(scambs.gov.uk\)](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/peer-review-report)

Appendices

Appendix A: Peer Review Action Plan

Report Author:

Jeff Membery- Head of Transformation, HR & Corporate Services
Telephone: 01954-712925

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Table 1 – Formal Recommendations

Recommendation	Action	Responsible Officer ¹ & Dates	Progress
Recommendation 1 Better Articulate your vision through a revised business plan which sets the context place narrative and communicate effectively to staff and key partners	The Council will – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise and enhance the narrative around the Business Plan, with a clear vision and context section. The plan will be shared with key partners and colleagues. 	LW – March 2024	
Recommendation 2 Reset and define relationships at a local and regional level with key partners to support the delivery of business plan priorities	The Council will – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold at least 2 Planning parish workshops and training sessions, and 2 Cabinet-Parish Liaison meetings a year, focusing on areas identified by parishes as useful to them. Hold meetings with stakeholder organisations to identify opportunities to strengthen working arrangements and continue to build effective relationships with the Combined Authority, Greater Cambridge Partnership, Oxford – Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership, Parishes and other key partners 	SK/HJ – March 2025 LT & Cabinet - ongoing	
Recommendation 3			

¹ LW – Liz Watts; SK – Stephen Kelly; HJ – Heather Jones; PM – Peter Maddock; FA – Farzana Ahmed; AA – Anne Ainsworth; AF – Andrew Francis; GB – Gareth Bell; HC – Helen Cornwell; JM – Jeff Membery; KL – Kevin Ledger; BM – Cllr Brian Milnes

<p>Finance</p> <p>a. Accelerate the closure of outstanding accounts.</p> <p>b. Develop an efficiency strategy to demonstrate how the future budget gap will be bridged.</p> <p>c. Ensure effective and regular financial monitoring which includes forecast financial performance and is owned by service managers.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 24</p>	<p>The Council will –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that adequate resource is allocated to close the accounts and will liaise with the external auditors where appropriate to ensure swift progress is made. • Work closely with the transformation team and Transformation Board to develop, monitor, and report on a schedule of progress towards the Target Operating Model (TOM) and delivery of associated savings. • Escalate reporting of any forecast shortfalls to Leadership Team at an early stage to allow corrective action to be promptly undertaken. • Complete the testing, refining and roll out of the accountancy forecasting module of the Tech1 accountancy system. • Undertake regular meetings between accountancy business partners and heads of service to monitor and review financial performance at a service level. 	<p>PM – September 2024</p> <p>FA – May 2024</p> <p>FA – May 2024</p> <p>FA – September 2024</p> <p>PM – July 2024</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>Review the robustness of data/information provided to members to support effective decision making</p>	<p>The Council will –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a lead data officer to shape the delivery of cleaner, better-quality data and ensure it is used to improve services to residents. • Provide training for all officers responsible for the drafting of reports to improve their understanding of where data/information is best obtained and who needs 	<p>AA – April 2025</p> <p>LW – January 2024</p>	<p>Training delivered at CMT on 23</p>

	<p>to be consulted to ensure this data is correct and up to date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure report recommendations are evidence driven and conclusions in reports reference the supporting evidence which should be available to members making the decision. 	LW – January 2024	<p>Jan. Action complete. Training delivered at CMT on 23 Jan. Action complete.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5 Develop a member development plan to ensure all members are supported in their role and review it regularly</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 25</p>	<p>The Council will –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft a comprehensive Member Development plan. • Consult with members to better understand the support and development opportunities that they need to undertake their role and develop a training programme that they will value. • Schedule in further consultations with members to see whether the delivery of the programme is still meeting their needs or requires an update/revision 	<p>AF/BM– August 2024</p> <p>AF – October 2024</p> <p>AF – August 2025</p>	
<p>Recommendation 6 Develop a community strategy to ensure there is a structured focus around enabling and supporting communities and further build on the relationship with the VCS and parishes</p>	<p>The Council will –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a first step to develop a “Community Statement” which will articulate the offer for Communities to give a clear understanding of what they can expect from us. 	GB – September 2024	
<p>Recommendation 7 Develop with pace your organisational development and people strategies.</p>	<p>The Council will –</p>	HC – January 2024	<p>Values launched at 6 Feb Town</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the work on corporate values to give colleagues clear, relevant, and instructive insight into the actions and behaviours that the Council values. • Complete a draft people strategy for consultation with colleagues. • Complete a draft organisational development strategy for consultation with colleagues. 	<p>HC – February 2024</p> <p>HC – May 2024</p>	<p>Hall meeting. Action ongoing</p> <p>Initial Draft Completed</p>
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>Develop a clear narrative for transformation with wider organisational ownership and review the governance structures.</p>	<p>The Council will –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the transformation program with an associated communications plan & transformation roadmap for internal and external audiences in order to improve the understanding of what the program is here to achieve and the role each service can play in its delivery. • Include at least one target for managers to deliver the Target Operating Model (TOM) and/or delivering bankable savings as part of the annual performance review. • Introduce a KPI around transformational change/delivery of Transformation savings. 	<p>JM - February 2024</p> <p>ALL - April 2024</p> <p>JM - May 2024</p>	<p>Promoted at 6 Feb Town Hall meeting. Action ongoing</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the remit of Transformation Board so that it includes Cabinet representation and focusses on supporting the delivery of the TOM and associated savings. 	JM & AA -March 2024	Complete - New Format and membership agreed.
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>Review the performance metrics that is representative of the whole business at a strategic and operational level E.g thread between business plan, risk and performance measures.</p>	<p>The Council will -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete revision of business plan and KPI reporting arrangements for the 24/25 year. • Hold annual member officer workshop to review & revise existing KPIs to ensure they reflect the key parts of the organisation and meet member needs. • Continue to respond to requests from Cabinet and/or Scrutiny & Overview Committee for additions to – or changes to – KPIs. 	<p>AA – January 2024</p> <p>AA - December 2024</p> <p>KL – As required.</p>	Completed
<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>Ensure your ICT provision supports your transformation plans</p>	<p>The Council will –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the review of the shared service arrangements reviewing the whole of the offering and the delivery model to ensure that it meets the future needs of the 3 Councils. • Work with partners to look at alternative options for IT provision to see if they better support the transformation agenda. • Directly employ 2 developers to work hand in hand with 3C ICT’s digital team to speed the delivery of transformation projects. 	<p>LW – July 2025</p> <p>LW/AA/JM – July 2025</p> <p>JM – July 2024</p>	Review has started - ongoing

Recommendation 11 Undertake the LGA 3-day communication review to support internal communications	The Council will – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> commission the review as suggested and draft an improvement plan based upon the results. 	GB – September 2024.	
Recommendation 12 Undertake an effectiveness review of the Councils Overview and scrutiny committee	The Council will – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discuss this recommendation with the Chair of Scrutiny and Overview committee. agree actions with the Chair to ensure the work programme carries effective oversight of corporate risk. 	AF – September 2024	Meeting held with Scrutiny Chair on 13/02/2024. Actions agreed With Chair*

* It was agreed that significant work had already been undertaken to improve the effectiveness of Scrutiny, including a full CfPS external review in 2020. Agreed with Chair that good progress had been made in delivering on the outcomes of that review, but with joint recognition that efforts can always be made to improve effectiveness further.

Agreed that senior officer buy in is demonstrated through regular “triangulation” meetings with CE, Leader, Chair and Vice Chair.

Agreed that Scrutiny officer would work with Chair and Vice Chair to develop our work programme to include a longer term look at specific high profile corporate risks using the corporate risk register as a guide.

Table 2 - Other advice, suggestions or recommendations contained in the report

Suggestions	Actions	Responsible Officer & Dates	Progress
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<p>Deliver a real time information management system.</p>	<p>The Council will –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify which software will best meet its needs in producing real time automated dashboards through interfaces with key back-office processing and case management systems. • Procure the agreed software, identify data champions, and arrange training for champions, managers and key users. • Obtain temporary external support in setting up initial key dashboards. 	<p>JM & AA– April 2024</p> <p>KL – August 2024</p> <p>KL – October 24</p>	<p>Complete – agreed on Power BI</p>
<p>The council undertake an independent resident survey to obtain a representative sample of resident views beyond planning and growth</p>	<p>The Council will –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a resident survey as suggested. • Put in the business plan a commitment to Identify current best practice in obtaining customer feedback and satisfaction levels. • Implement a KPI for customer satisfaction across Council services. 	<p>GB – October 24</p> <p>JM – March 2025</p> <p>AA – April 2025</p>	
<p>Set up a statutory officer group to include the Chief Executive, S151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and Head of Internal Audit</p>	<p>The Council will –</p> <p>Set this group up and have regular meetings.</p>	<p>LW – January 2024</p>	<p>Group established and regular meetings scheduled. Action complete.</p>
<p>A clear member engagement plan is required to ensure access to key colleagues at the right level in the organisation is</p>	<p>The Council Will –</p>	<p>ALL – March 2024</p>	

<p>established to improve the responsiveness with member's case management and democratic duties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all teams have an officer available for member contact (including having a team member in the office) every working day. • Work with colleagues in 3C ICT and Colleagues in the City Council and Huntingdonshire Council to improve members access to officers using the Teams system 	<p>JM – August 2024</p>	<p>Actioned – Team Members are in the office daily</p>
<p>Review the strategic capacity of the leadership team, considering the spans of control and number of direct reports reporting to the chief executive</p>	<p>The Council will – Consider this as part of the annual Performance Development Review process for Leadership Team colleagues.</p>	<p>LW – July 2024</p>	

Agenda Item 8



**South
Cambridgeshire**
District Council

Report to:	Cabinet	16 April 2024
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cllr Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities	
Lead Officer:	Anne Ainsworth, Chief Operating Officer	
Key Decision:	No	

Proposed administration of the Northstowe Community Activation Grant Fund on behalf of Homes England, criteria and award process

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - a. approves the Council administering Homes England's Activation Grant Fund as set out in paragraphs 8-10.
 - b. approves the scheme criteria and guidance for the Community Activation Fund as set out in Appendix A.

Details

2. Homes England is the master developer of Phase 2 and 3 Northstowe, which will bring forward 8,500 new homes, in addition to the 1,500 new homes nearing completion in Phase 1 (L&Q). Through its Section 106 developer agreement, Homes England provides substantial funding to support the needs of the developing community. This includes a £1 million place making fund, administered in the main by Cambridgeshire County Council to ensure services can be provided to this new population, such as child and family support. Some of this funding is also made available to the district council to provide community development workers and a future small-scale community grant fund, similar to the Council's Community Chest will be developed.
3. However, a gap in the funding available to support larger scale community activation initiatives has been identified. Such community-led activities are vital to establishing a thriving and welcoming community. Such activities can also project the benefits of living in a new community, purpose built to support wellbeing, as they are targeted at both current and potential residents. The Community Activation Fund would provide £20,000 a year for five years to help fill this gap.

4. Homes England itself has no direct experience of offering these grants that are aimed at community led organisations; it is therefore asking the district council to partner with them and administer this service due to its strong track record of distributing grants of a similar scale.
5. Homes England is already funding one community development officer post at Northstowe, but it is recognised by both parties that the administration of this proposed scheme will produce additional demands above those duties and therefore a 5% administration fee on all grant applications administered under this scheme by the Communications and Communities team has been agreed with Homes England in principle.
6. The details of the proposed scheme, including guidance for applications and grant award criteria, are set out in Appendix A. The funding has been agreed and the approach endorsed by the relevant management team at Homes England.
7. The grant fund is proposed to remain open throughout the financial year, so long as there are still unallocated funds.
8. The assessment of grants will be made on receipt of the application by a panel of South Cambridgeshire District Council and Homes England officers, familiar with the Northstowe development and the community development landscape. Details of the applications received will also be shared with the local elected District Councillors to provide comments.
9. Applications recommended for funding by the officer panel would be considered by The Council's Chief Operating Officer, who is the authority's Senior Responsible Officer for Northstowe. An officer decision notice would then be published.
10. Successful applicants would be required to acknowledge Homes England as the source of funding and the role of the district council in administering the grant.

Reasons for Recommendations

11. There is a genuine gap in the structure of available funding available locally to encourage larger scale community activation events and initiatives at Northstowe. Homes England recognises this but lacks the relevant capacity and experience to process and administer grants of this nature but has committed funds to enable a partner organisation to administer this fund on its behalf.
12. South Cambridgeshire District Council's Communications and Communities Team is active at Northstowe and has a wide range of community contacts and knowledge of the current range of networks and activities present. It is well positioned to encourage and support applications to this fund, and the technical expertise to administer the funds effectively.
13. By providing the administration of this fund South Cambridgeshire District Council will be able to work in partnership with Homes England to positively influence the strength and character of the new community at Northstowe.

Options

14. To agree and accept in full the proposed grant scheme criteria, guidance and administrative arrangements.
15. To agree in principle to the proposal, but with changes recommended to the proposed scheme criteria, guidance or administrative arrangements, giving reasons.
16. To reject the proposal to administer this grant scheme, giving reasons.

Implications

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

Financial and Fraud Risk

18. The grant scheme funding will be provided by Homes England on an annual basis. The usual controls applied to grant schemes to prevent fraud or inappropriate use of funds will be applied to this fund as set out in Appendix A.

Staffing

19. An officer from South Cambridgeshire District Council's Communications and Communities Team will sit on the officer panel and provide administration support for the Activation Grant Scheme. A 5% administration fee on all grant applications administered under this scheme by the Communications and Communities team has been agreed with Homes England in principle.

Risks/Opportunities

20. The proposal offers an opportunity to enhance community development support at Northstowe and support positive community action which will enhance the reputation of Northstowe as a good place to live, contributing to the success of the new community, as a key component of the sustainable housing growth planned for the district.

Equality and Diversity

21. As with all grant schemes administered by the District Council, the merits of the projects considered for funding will be judged with equality and diversity in mind, such that the whole community may benefit from the successful projects.

Climate Change

22. The scheme's grant criteria specifically encourage projects which will support Net Zero Carbon and movement towards a circular economy.

Health and Wellbeing

23. The scheme's grant criteria permit projects with an emphasis on health and wellbeing benefits, in keeping with Northstowe's development as a Healthy New Town.

Consultation responses

24. Northstowe Town Council and local elected District Councillors have been informed of this potential grant scheme. Both district councillors for Longstanton Ward have expressed support for the proposal. The Town Council supports the proposed grant scheme; however, their feedback was that the level of support available from community development officers to support project development should be made clear and that other sources of match funding signposted. They wanted clear direction as to eligible costs and the typical size of awards.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Growing local businesses and economies

25. The projects delivered through this proposed grant scheme will enhance the reputation of Northstowe as a location to both live and do business, with the potential to attract investors to the Local Centre, Enterprise Zone and Town Centre,

Being green to our core

26. The scheme's grant criteria specifically encourage projects which will support Net Zero Carbon and movement towards a circular economy.

A modern and caring Council

27. The proposed scheme will bring activities and events to the residents of Northstowe, without the need to travel, and at no cost to residents.

28. The district council has invested heavily in Northstowe and its community and the proposed scheme consolidates and extends this investment in Northstowe as a thriving new community.

Appendices

Appendix A: Guidance notes for the Community Activation Fund

Report Author:

Clare Gibbons – Growth Manager - Communities

Telephone: (01954) 713290

Guidance notes for the Community Activation Fund

What is the Community Activation Fund?

The Community Activation Fund provides financial support to voluntary and community sector groups, charities and public sector bodies wishing to further improve quality of life in Northstowe. The funding for the Community Activation Fund has been provided by master developer Homes England and will be administered by South Cambridgeshire District Council on its behalf.

Who can apply?

Applicants must:

- Either be
 - a non-profit group or organisation (including Community Interest Companies, CIC) based in Northstowe or benefiting Northstowe residents,
 - a public sector body with a demonstrable community focus (individuals and businesses are not eligible).
 - a Parish or Town Council.
- Have a written constitution or mission statement.
- Have an elected committee or representative steering group.
- Be able to provide an up-to-date copy of their accounts and any relevant protection policies.

If you have questions about these criteria, please contact us

Northstowe.Community@scambbs.gov.uk

If your organisation does not have a written constitution, mission statement and/or relevant protection policies please contact Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service for advice in meeting these requirements.

Please call 01223 464696 or email enquiries@cambridgecvs.org.uk

What must the funded project deliver?

The project must directly benefit Northstowe residents, contribute to community vibrancy and enable opportunities for participation.

What can be funded?

The activity or project should relate to one or more of both the primary and secondary criteria:

Primary Criteria: The proposal must address one or more of the following issues relating to quality of life in Northstowe.

- Activation events to promote use of Community Facilities

- Improved access to arts and cultural activities at Northstowe
- Initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of Northstowe's residents.
- Improved access to Education, Employment and Skills for Northstowe's residents.
- Transport and accessibility to local facilities and services from and within Northstowe.
- Environmental sustainability and minimisation of waste within the Northstowe community.

Secondary Criteria: The project must deliver one or more of the following:

- The project will enhance the vibrancy and character of Northstowe, contributing to the creation of a successful place.
- The proposal will support community events which will attract people to Northstowe (both residents and visitors).
- The proposal will support increased awareness of Northstowe and contribute towards a positive public perception of the town.
- The proposal will support community cohesion at Northstowe.

What cannot be funded?

- On-going revenue costs or overheads (e.g. salaries, rent, advertising, promotional materials).
- Projects that replace funding by other public sector bodies, including parish or town councils.
- Items that would only benefit 'individuals' and not the wider public (e.g. sports kits)
- Projects that have previously received Community Activation funding in the same financial year or would qualify for other funding specifically made available to support community development at Northstowe.

How much can be applied for?

The maximum award is £10,000 in any single financial year (April-March) and can be for up to 100% of project costs. It is anticipated that up to £20,000 per annum will be made available through this fund.

If there is high demand for funding, it may mean that the Community Activation Fund is only able to contribute to your project. The Council reserves the right to prioritise based on funding available, number and type of applications received at any given time, priorities for the financial year and value for money. Eligibility does not guarantee grant funding.

When can groups apply?

The Community Activation fund is open year-round. Groups can apply at any time during the financial year until the funding is fully allocated for that period.

Preferred green options

Applications to the Community Activation fund to renovate or purchase items that include an internal combustion engine i.e. an engine that burns fossil fuel (including accessories) will not normally be considered.

For such an application to be considered evidence must be provided to demonstrate why an electric variant is not being considered. Such evidence should include market research demonstrating that a similar electrically powered variant is not within price range, or that due to technical differences such a unit would not be fit for purpose.

What to include in your project proposal

- A project description (no more than 1,000 words) which must demonstrate how the eligibility criteria are met and set out the anticipated benefits that will arise from this project.
- Plan of proposed work, timeline and delivery dates and post-delivery project evaluation plan.
- Breakdown of project costs.
- An indication of how many participants will engage with the project and how many volunteers and/or professionals will support its delivery (if paid, please state rates of pay within the project costs outline).

For biodiversity projects please include:

- A plan of the proposed work, including a project map and project outcomes
- A timeline of the proposed work indicating milestones and delivery dates
- A brief management plan which describes how the project will be sustainable.

What supporting documentation is required?

- A copy of your organisation's constitution or mission statement
- A copy of your latest accounts (audited if available)
- Comparative quotes for the community activity or project
- A copy of your safeguarding policy
- A bank statement for the account you wish the funds to be paid into. This statement must be dated within the last month.

In addition, the following will be required if relevant to the project:

- Appropriate protection policies: children, young people, vulnerable adults
- Public liability insurance documentation
- Public Rights of Way or other land use consents from the landowner
- Any other relevant material that would support your application.

How will the grant be paid?

If successful, the applicant will receive the grant payment once we have received acknowledgement of the grant offer and acceptance of the terms and conditions.

What are the conditions of funding?

Groups that are awarded a grant will be expected to comply with the following conditions as a minimum:

- Funding must only be used for the agreed purpose and spent within 12-months of the award being made (unless otherwise agreed in writing)
- Any publicity must acknowledge the award provided, indicating that the funds were provided by Homes England and administered by South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Unused grant must be returned to South Cambridgeshire District Council
- An end of project evaluation must be submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council within 3-months of project completion.
- For biodiversity projects: the project must deliver a sustainable increase in local biodiversity, known as Biodiversity Net Gain. An increase means that you should be able to demonstrate positive change in biodiversity from pre-project conditions (for example, number of trees, number of square metres of land either created or improved). Sustainability means that it should persist over time and not be a temporary change.

Any award will not be means tested but applicants will be expected to have sought other means of local funding, especially from the town or parish council who may have funds available through planning developments (S106) or through its precept (S137).

For further information please go to:

www.Northstowe.com website for general information about Northstowe.

www.scams.gov.uk/ *new landing page* for further information about this grant fund and an on-line application form.

If you need help with the online form, please contact

northstowe.community@scams.gov.uk

Agenda Item 9



**South
Cambridgeshire**
District Council

Report to:	Cabinet	16 April 2024
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cllr John Williams – Lead Member for Finance	
Lead Officer:	Jeff Membery – Head of Transformation, HR, and Corporate Services	
Key Decision:	No	

Low-income Family Tracker (LIFT)

Executive Summary

1. The Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) is a platform that layers multiple datasets held within the Council, alongside some external datasets, and applies modelling to provide insights down to a household level. Over 70 Local Authorities in England, including Cambridge City Council, have already purchased a license for the platform, and have used it to effectively support low-income residents in a more proactive and preventative manner, likely saving the Council money later through reduced crisis support. This report recommends the purchase of a license for the LIFT platform, alongside additional fixed-term officer resource to project manage the system and ensure it is utilised effectively across the Council.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Cabinet agrees:
 - a. Purchasing a two-year license for the Low-Income Family Tracker platform at a cost of £53,000.
 - b. Employing an additional two-year fixed term Development Officer, at a total cost of £104,000, to manage and maintain the system and coordinate projects across the Council.
 - c. A budget of £30,000 to support the benefits take up campaign with direct mailshots.

Details

Background

3. Part of the 'cost-of-living project' initiated in March 2023 included allowing sufficient officer resource to begin to investigate how the Council could use data better to target support to those in need. Many of the cost-of-living schemes have

been data-led, such as the provision of electric blankets being targeted to individuals receiving council tax support and disability benefits, and the Mobile Food Hub visiting locations data suggested were of highest deprivation that did not have access to existing foodbanks. Although there were no specific pledges regarding the data aspect of the cost-of-living project, dedicating time to investigating what could be possible was outlined as a priority.

4. This report is a culmination of the data related work and proposes a continuation of this in a more comprehensive and corporate manner.

The LIFT Platform

5. LIFT is a platform set up by Policy in Practice. It brings together monthly datasets that the council would upload, alongside some external data, and provides modelling techniques that would allow the council to analyse and support low-income households via one accessible dashboard.
6. It gives insights from the data to tackle the drivers of poverty and help build financial resilience in the district. It is also able to model the impact of policy changes at an individual household level and would be able to identify residents who are struggling financially today or may be at risk of struggling financially in the future.
7. LIFT would take the Council's benefits data and combine it with further policy knowledge of the welfare system to apply analytical modelling techniques and give a range of insights. These insights would provide a detailed picture of an individual household's circumstances and allow us to understand the cumulative impact of different policies and target support activities down to a household level. Although the Council hold significant data sets, it has not been possible to overlay data previously to give the picture the LIFT platform will offer for specific customers.
8. Results from LIFT would allow the Council to become more proactive in supporting residents. By proactively contacting people at an earlier stage, it is likely costs will be reduced in the future and savings could be delivered. For example, a reduction in homelessness applications, or earlier intervention clearing council tax or rent arrears.

Uses for LIFT

9. Although there are many ways to use LIFT, one of the simplest uses is to identify cases of missed benefits claims. LIFT uses the data the Council inputs into it and can model which people in the district should be claiming national benefits but aren't. The Council can then contact these individuals directly to increase benefit take-up across the district.
10. As an example, it is possible to use the LIFT modelling to target those missing out on pension credits, which is thought of as the first 'easy win' using the platform. Modelling has suggested that there are around 100 missed pension credits claims that would be able to be targeted using the LIFT platform. Successfully targeting

just 50 of these households is estimated to put £166,083 per year directly into the pockets of these households. Based on the average 7-year life expectancy of an individual following a pension credits claim, this has a lifetime value of £1,162,581.

11. It is also possible within the platform to apply similar modelling to other benefits, such as Universal Credit, Tax Credits, and Housing Benefit among others. Residents pursuing new benefit claims come at no cost to the Council, but puts more money into the local economy, and is likely to reduce the burden of crisis support the Council delivers.
12. Outside of a benefits take-up campaign, the ability to overlay multiple datasets, model different scenarios, and filter results based on family size, age, and employment status to name a few, provides a vast number of opportunities for the platform to be utilised effectively.
13. LIFT could aid Council Tax collection as it would allow us to identify those who have not paid their Council Tax and are not financially resilient enough to clear their arrears. These households could then be provided with extra support, improving Council Tax collection rates as well as the wellbeing of those residents involved.
14. Similarly, LIFT could support homelessness prevention by identifying households in multiple debts and offering targeted support. This support could be through an appointment with an Income Maximisation Officer or encouraging an application for discretionary housing payments.
15. LIFT could also support existing projects. For example, EPC ratings are held within the platform and so it would be possible to filter all residents that are claiming Universal Credit and live in a house that has an EPC of D or below, and are therefore eligible for retrofit funding under the national Homes Upgrade Grant Scheme (HUG2). These could be contacted directly to be offered this and support this scheme.
16. Further to this, below gives a non-exhaustive list of examples of service areas across the Council that could utilise LIFT.

Benefits	Revenues	Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pension Credit take-up • Universal Credit take-up • Council Tax Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting support for those that can't pay • Reducing arrears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness prevention • Supporting debt repayment
Communities	Climate & Environment	Economic Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-poverty analysis • Tackling most deprived households • Tackling loneliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting energy upgrades on low EPC and low income households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target unemployed households with low barriers to work

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging active lifestyles 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support work & health pilot project
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Resources required

17. Purchasing a license for LIFT for two years costs £26,500 per annum, totalling £53,000 over two years. This also includes the purchase of a benefits calculator that will be able to calculate all benefits SCDC residents are eligible for, both local and national, in one place.
18. An additional Development Officer at grade 6 will be required to coordinate projects across the Council, as well as maintaining the system and supporting others to use LIFT effectively. It is proposed that this post encompasses and oversees the cost-of-living project work, with the support of the Cost-of-Living Project Officer, as there is a clear relationship between the two workstreams. The Council's agreed budget for 2024/25 has identified two data focussed roles that will be recruited to shortly. These officers would work closely with the Development Officer working on this time limited project to support the data analysis.
19. It is also recommended to assign a budget of £30,000 to support the benefits take up campaign with direct mailshots.
20. The Council's Section 151 Officer has confirmed that these recommendations are able to be funded from existing and available earmarked reserves.

Reasons for Recommendations

21. LIFT is already being used at over 70 Local Authorities across England, allowing a more proactive and preventative approach to supporting low-income families.
22. Modelling by Policy in Practice has suggested that, overall, there are £21,735,047 of benefits unclaimed in South Cambridgeshire. However, it is important to note that this modelling includes people who do not claim any form of support and therefore will not appear in datasets held by the Council or other public bodies. Therefore, even with LIFT, the Council will not be able to identify these people or contact them.
23. The actual number of people in South Cambridgeshire who can be identified as potentially being eligible for unclaimed support would only be known once local datasets have been inputted into the LIFT platform. Based on the research carried out by officers, and conversations with Policy in Practice, it is realistic to expect the platform to be able to identify 10% of the modelled potential unclaimed support. Although local take-up is not known at this stage, this could mean that around an additional £2,000,000 of support is claimed by residents on low income.
24. This is money that people are already eligible for and comes at no extra cost to the Council should residents apply for this.

25. The product also represents an opportunity to 'spend to save' for the Council, as implementing preventative measures is likely to reduce the number of people who enter crisis. This could save the Council money on temporary accommodation, council tax arrears, rent arrears, and cost of living crisis support to name a few. There is no direct data available at this stage to put a savings value on this, however there is a clear rationale to assume that the financial return on investment only grows larger the more the platform is used.
26. There is also a high social return on investment anticipated to be evident in several ways as there is a clear correlation between debt/low income and health and wellbeing outcomes. Maximising residents' income through targeted support and increased benefits take up could lead to better mental and physical health outcomes and provide secure homes for families at risk.

Options

27. Recommended option – purchase a license for the LIFT platform for two years, commit funding to employing an additional Development Officer for a fixed term of two years and allow £30,000 budget for targeted support. The total financial commitment is £187,000.
28. Cabinet could choose not to progress with any of the recommended options set out in the report and either do nothing or ask officers to carry out further work.
29. Defer a decision until a later date, asking officers for specific further information to allow a decision to be made.

Implications

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

Financial and Fraud Risk

31. The Council's Section 151 Officer has confirmed that funding for this project is able to be drawn from existing and available earmarked reserves. If all recommendations were agreed, this would cost a total of £187,000 and all funding would come from earmarked reserves.

Financial summary of recommendations

	Funded through earmarked reserves (£)
LIFT platform license (2 years)	53,000
Officer resource (2 years)	104,000
Promotion budget to contact residents identified	30,000
Total	187,000

Legal

32. As residents' personal data is involved, there are potential GDPR related risks. To mitigate this, no personal data will be inputted into the LIFT system. Instead, each household will be issued a reference number to be used within LIFT, and matched with personal contact details later, outside of LIFT. Data sharing agreements will also be put in place and a full DPIA will be undertaken for this project.

Staffing

33. Creation of a new full time equivalent 2-year fixed term post at Grade 6 will be necessary to deliver the project.

Risks/Opportunities

34. The recommendations in this report provide the opportunity to implement a more proactive and preventative approach to the support the Council provides, easing the effects of the current economic conditions for residents. Were the Council not to progress these recommendations, it is likely that more people will need to access services offered by the Council and public sector partners.

Equality and Diversity

35. It is anticipated that this project will have a positive impact on several different protected characteristic groups, especially those who we know to be most vulnerable in the current economic climate, such as older people, young children, and disabled people.

Climate Change

36. The recommendations provide the opportunity to support the Council to meet its Net Zero Carbon targets through increasing the take up of schemes providing retrofit upgrades to households in the district.

Health and Wellbeing

37. The recommendations are extremely likely to provide positive health and wellbeing outcomes for residents. Increasing their financial resilience and security is likely to reduce stress and have further positive impacts on their mental and physical wellbeing. Additionally, LIFT would be able to support positive health and wellbeing outcomes in other ways, such as through tackling loneliness in single person households, or through increased uptake of physical activity schemes.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Growing local businesses and economies

38. Supporting residents to become more financially resilient provides the opportunity to grow the local economy as they spend their additional income.

Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in

39. Being able to target support at those in rent arrears would allow residents to live in secure housing and reduce the risk of homelessness.

Being green to our core

40. LIFT provides the opportunity to support the provision of HUG2 funding across the district, providing retrofit upgrades to off-gas households.

A modern and caring Council

41. Taking a more proactive and preventative approach to crisis support provides the opportunity for better outcomes of all those involved. It would allow the Council to support families before they drop into crisis, rather than once they already have.

Report Author:

Gareth Bell – Communications and Communities Service Manager

Telephone: (01954) 713289

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Agenda Item 10



**South
Cambridgeshire
District Council**

Report to:	Cabinet	16 April 2024
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cllr Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities	
Lead Officer:	Liz Watts, Chief Executive	

Homes for Ukraine – Landlord Incentive Scheme Revision

Executive Summary

Key Decision

1. No

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Cabinet agree the revised Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme policy, as set out in Appendix A.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. A Landlord Incentive Scheme was launched on 9 October 2023 to help improve access to the private rented market for guests who had been hosted under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Although 25 landlords have contacted the Council to find out more information since the incentive scheme was launched, only one landlord has signed up. In general, the feedback has been that the incentive package offered is not generous enough when compared to a landlord renting using their existing methods.
4. A comprehensive marketing plan for the scheme was launched, which included an online editorial in the Cambridge Independent, an advert for the scheme in the print copy of the Cambridge Independent (which ran for three editions), Google and Facebook adverts and leaflet information to every home in the district alongside the Council's residents' magazine. Due to the lack of sign-ups a review of the scheme has been deemed necessary.
5. The proposed revision to the policy will enable a much more comprehensive package to be offered to participating landlords, further increasing the number of

properties available without adding additional pressures to the social housing system.

6. The Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme is fully funded from the Government tariff funding provided to support guests.

Details

7. The Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme offers financial incentives to landlords that own properties within the district in exchange for them giving tenancies to guests who had been hosted in the area.
8. Feedback from hosts and guests had been provided that Ukrainian guests' lack of credit history in the UK was severely hindering their ability to access the private rental market. The private rental market in South Cambridgeshire is highly competitive with landlords having their choice of tenants in most cases. The scheme aimed to level the playing field for guests, so they have an equal chance of securing a property.
9. Since the incentive scheme launched, there has been over 25 enquiries from landlords who were interested. However, to date, there has only been one landlord who has signed up as, in general, landlords have not seen the package being offered as sufficient incentive and renting directly to the private market is more beneficial financially.
10. A comprehensive marketing plan, which included online Facebook and Google adverts, print adverts in the Cambridge Independent, an online editorial in Cambridge Independent and leaflets in the Council's residents' magazine that is delivered to every home in the district. The Council is collecting data on where people found out about the incentive scheme, and we know that digital marketing has generated 41,000 views of the Council's advert.
11. Given the number of views of the advert, the fact information has been sent to all homes in the district, alongside the lack of landlords signing up, and feedback received from landlords who have been in contact with the Council, a review is necessary to try and secure more homes.
12. So far, the Homes for Ukraine Moving On Team has seen 289 groups move on from hosted accommodation, with 123 finding private rental accommodation, 60 moving into social housing through the normal priority application and allocation process, and 106 have returned to Ukraine. As well as this, the team have facilitated 129 rematches to new hosts where needed.
13. There are currently 135 groups of Homes of Ukraine guests living with hosts. Although host thank you payments are now available for three years, following the latest extension by Government, a number of these groups will require support to move on to live more independently and officers have assessed that the incentive scheme is still required to support this work. A revised incentive scheme will increase the opportunity for these groups in finding private rented accommodation that is affordable. A survey has been sent to hosts and guests to help the Council

plan when guests may need help moving on. The responses to the survey so far have once again highlighted that hosts and guests are asking the Council for support accessing the private rented sector.

14. The incentive scheme is part of a wider package of measures the Council has put in place to help guests to move on to live independently. So far, £102,000 has been spent on these measures. This includes £73,000 on furniture packages to help guests with the initial cost of setting up their own home, £24,000 on rent deposits and rent in advance, and £5,000 on other support payments which includes removal costs, guarantor funding and transport. These measures align with the support the Council offers to other vulnerable residents who are at risk of homelessness.
15. The original Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme offered varying incentive payments which were calculated on the percentage difference between the average market rent and the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate for each property size. Local Housing Allowance is the maximum amount of housing benefit a private renter can claim to help pay their rent. Renting at LHA rate will mean the full rent is covered by benefits.
16. Below is a table showing the lump sum incentives provided under the agreed and current Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme. A higher incentive was provided for landlords willing to offer the home at LHA rate. This is due to the rent being more affordable for guests on lower incomes or benefits. The incentives were in exchange for providing the home for six months. Two further payments, at the same rates, were also offered to the landlord to provide the home for up to 18 months.

Number of bedrooms	Market rent incentive	LHA rate incentive
1 Bedroom	£1,140	£2,280
2 Bedroom	£1,300	£2,600
3 Bedroom	£1,350	£2,750
4 Bedroom	£1,410	£2,820

17. The proposed revision of the scheme has been designed following discussions with landlords who have expressed an interest but did not sign up due to the package not being enough of an incentive. The new scheme provided even more incentive to provide homes at LHA rate as they are more affordable for guests.
18. The proposed package on offer by the Council for landlords providing homes at LHA rate would be:
 - a. 6 months' LHA rate rent in advance to the landlord
 - b. A one off £1,000 thank you payment for joining the scheme – this would not be available again if the landlord provides the home for a period beyond the initial six months
 - c. An additional top up payment to the landlord to compensate them for offering the home at LHA rent, which is lower than they would receive if renting to other tenants privately (rates in table below, which are based on number of bedrooms in the home)

Number of bedrooms	Additional payment to compensate for providing home at LHA rate
1 bedroom	£1,800
2 bedroom	£2,700
3 bedroom	£3,150
4 bedroom	£3,000

19. The additional payment suggested is based on the difference between the rent a landlord could expect, on average, over a six-month period when compared to the rent paid at LHA rate.
20. The proposed package on offer by the Council for landlords providing homes at market rate would be:
- a. A one off £1,000 thank you payment for joining the scheme
 - b. One month rent paid in advance
21. Any rent paid in advance to the landlord at the LHA rate will be recouped by the Council from the tenant monthly. To support with the transition to living more independently, the Council will not recover the first month's rent from the tenant and will instead start collecting rent from the tenants from the beginning of the second month.
22. Rent in advance, and any incentive payment, will only be provided to the landlord once a signed tenancy agreement is in place and the tenant moves in.
23. Example of LHA rate incentive payment. A landlord offers a two-bed property for six months.
- a. £5,700 rent in advance paid
 - b. £2,700 payment to compensate for renting at LHA rate
 - c. £1,000 thank you payment for offering a tenancy
24. SCDC will support up to 18 months of incentive payments to a landlord with the same guest. The guest living in the home must be given the first opportunity to extend their stay by the landlord, but when a guest/s chose to move on, as their circumstances may change, the Council will offer the landlord the opportunity to remain in the scheme with a new Homes for Ukraine tenant.
25. Under current legislation, landlords cannot end a tenancy early unless there is a good reason, such as repeat non-payment of rent or major damage to the property, and a legal process is required.
26. If a tenant moves out during a 6-month tenancy, and at least 2-months remain, the landlord must offer the Council the opportunity to home another person/family for the rest of the 6-month period. This will not require a further thank you payment as it has already been paid.
27. There is no impact on the Council's general fund as the Landlord Incentive Scheme can be fully funded using the Government tariff we receive for each

guest arriving under the Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme. There is sufficient tariff funding available to allocate to this scheme.

28. It is worth noting that there is currently a Renters Reform Bill in the early stages of development. It was first introduced to parliament in May 2023. This bill will abolish fixed term tenancies, and replace all tenancies with monthly rolling tenancies, which require 2 months' notice to end. This bill will also abolish 'non-fault evictions', providing more security to tenants. As this bill progresses it might be necessary to amend the incentive scheme.

Options

1. Cabinet agree the revised Landlord Incentive Scheme policy as set out in Appendix A (recommended option).
2. Cabinet agree the revised Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme as set out in appendix A, but with revisions.
3. Cabinet defers a decision to the next Cabinet meeting and provide advice on what additional information is required.
4. To reject the Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme revision and retain the current policy.
5. End the Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme entirely.

Implications

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

Financial and Fraud Risk.

30. The full cost of this scheme can be covered by the tariff funding that South Cambridgeshire District Council receives for each Homes for Ukraine arrival and will have no impact on any other budgets that SCDC hold. There are no implications for the funding of this scheme.
31. There is the risk that Homes for Ukraine guests will default on their agreement with the Council to pay back the monthly rent that the Council has paid in advance to the landlord. There are existing procedures within the Revenues department to support people to ensure payments are made. And where necessary, to aid in the collection of any unpaid monies owed to SCDC. This risk must be balanced against the increased risk of more homelessness applications if sufficient affordable accommodation cannot be found for guests moving on.

Legal

32. A legal agreement is required between SCDC and the tenant to ensure the rent paid upfront to the landlord is recovered monthly. The Council already provides this type of support to other residents who are at risk of homelessness and therefore the same pre-approved agreement will be used. The process to sign up landlords to the scheme includes a declaration that they will provide the home for a minimum of six months. The process also clarifies the incentive payments in each case. The declaration by the landlord allows the Council to use the property for the full six months, even if the tenant vacates it early.

Staffing

33. A fully resourced Moving On Team is in place to support Homes for Ukraine guests. The team includes Ukrainian speaking nationals. This team will administer this scheme and no additional resources are required. The team is funded from the Government tariff.

Risks/Opportunities

34. There are a significant number of Homes for Ukraine guests that have been living with their hosts for some time. Without sufficient support into independent accommodation, there is a risk these guests will approach SCDC as homeless. This could have knock on for the Council in trying to meet its duties to provide accommodation to vulnerable people and could increase pressure on social housing.

Equality and Diversity

35. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, considering any potential perceived equalities issues. The assessment highlighted the potential for negative social view on the support that is being provided for Homes for Ukraine guests. However, the assessment also saw this as a scheme that provides equal access to homes.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in

36. The proposal aligns with this aspect of South Cambridgeshire District Council's business plan. The scheme will help to provide more affordable housing to Homes for Ukraine guests who are moving on. It will encourage landlords to provide more properties available at a lower rental cost. There will be continuous review of uptake of the scheme and any wider impacts of the scheme on the private rented sector and homelessness applications in South Cambridgeshire.

Appendices

Appendix A: Landlord Incentive Scheme proposed policy

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Appendix A

Homes for Ukraine – Landlord Incentive Scheme Revision Proposed Policy

Policy statement:

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) acknowledges its responsibility to address the pressing humanitarian situation faced by Ukrainian guests seeking their own independent accommodation within our region. In line with our commitment to providing support and assistance to those in need, we are implementing the Landlord Incentive Scheme for Homes for Ukrainian (HFU) guests. This scheme aims to encourage landlords within South Cambridgeshire to rent their properties to Ukrainian refugees who are seeking safe and stable accommodation.

Objective:

The primary objective of the landlord incentive scheme is to increase the availability of suitable and independent housing for Homes for Ukraine guests within South Cambridgeshire, without adding additional stress to the social housing system. The policy seeks to achieve this by incentivising landlords to offer tenancies to Homes for Ukraine guests by providing a payment based on how many bedrooms their property has, and what type of tenancy they provide. South Cambridgeshire District Council will ask participating landlords for an initial 6-month tenancy. Landlords will qualify for payments for up to 18 months of tenancies with the same HFU family group. After this, if they take on a new family, they will qualify for payments again subject to eligibility criteria. This is so we can retain landlords and their properties for HFU guests who may arrive in South Cambridgeshire later.



The rationale to provide incentive payments for 18 months for each family a landlord provides their home to ensures SCDC supports them to access private rented accommodation, whilst also promoting the Ukrainian guests to become self-sufficient where possible. This scheme aims to address the urgent need for suitable accommodation for HFU guests, promoting a welcoming environment while also offering attractive incentives to participating landlords.

Incentives:

The landlord incentive scheme will provide landlords with a financial package for providing their rental property to a Homes for Ukraine guest on a six-month tenancy.

The following is a breakdown of the package on offer to landlords who offer tenancies at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. LHA is the maximum someone can claim in housing benefit for rent. This package is comprised of three payments:

- 1) A one off “thank you” payment of £1,000 for joining the scheme and offering a six-month tenancy.
- 2) A payment equivalent to six months’ rent at the LHA rate for the property size (table below for rates).
- 3) An additional top up payment to the landlord to compensate them for offering the home at LHA rent, which is lower than they would receive if renting to other tenants privately (rates in table below, which are based on an average rent for the number of bedrooms in the home – see table below).

This approach provides the landlord with security of guaranteed rent up front from SCDC. The tenant will then pay their monthly LHA rent directly to South Cambridgeshire District Council to recover some of the costs of this scheme. SCDC will only recover 5 months from the initial 6-month tenancy, gifting the first month’s rent to help with initial startup costs of a new tenancy.

After the initial 6 months, the landlord can decide whether they wish to sign up for a further 6 months. They are only eligible for the initial thank you payment once, but the other incentives remain the same. SCDC will support tenancies for 18 months



(equivalent to three, 6-month tenancies). After this, the decision will be down to the landlord on what rent they continue to charge. If after 18 months the family vacate the property, the landlord can continue to be offered the same incentives for another Homes for Ukraine group, but they are only eligible for the initial thank you payment once. It will not be paid again.

Landlords who offer a tenancy at market rent will receive:

- a one-off £1,000 thank you payment for joining the scheme.
- one month rent in advance.

If a tenant moves out of a property that has been provided under the scheme at LHA rate, and at least 2 months of the tenancy remain, then the landlord must offer the property to SCDC to house another individual/family for the remainder of the 6 months.

Through this scheme, SCDC will enter into agreements with both landlords and tenants who sign up. The relationship with the tenant will involve SCDC providing a loan to the sum of five months LHA rent. A loan agreement will be completed stating that if payments are not made then they will receive reminders, and if it remains unpaid then enforcement action can be taken as is standard Council policy. A loan repayment agreement will also be signed, confirming the tenant will pay their scheduled amount on the first of the month via direct debit to SCDC until their tenancy ends.

For landlords to receive the financial incentives offered by the scheme, they must enter into an agreement with SCDC that they will provide their property to Homes for Ukraine guests for a minimum of 6 months. No payment will be made until tenants move in.

Table 1: LHA rate 2024

Shared room rate	£121.13 week / £526.34 month
1 bedroom rate	£207.12 week / £900.00 month



2 bedroom rate	£218.63 week / £950.00 month
3 bedroom rate	£258.90 week / £1,125.00 month
4 bedroom rate	£333.70 week / £1,450.00 month

Table 2: difference between Private rent and LHA rates

Number of bedrooms	6 months' private rent (based on average for area)	6 months LHA (based on maximum available housing benefit)	Difference
1 Bedroom	£7200	£5,400	£1,800
2 Bedroom	£8400	£5,700	£2,700
3 Bedroom	£9900	£6,750	£3,150
4 Bedroom	£11700	£8,700	£3,000

Table 3: LHA incentive offered.

Number of bedrooms	6 months' LHA rent (based on maximum available in housing benefit – SCDC will claim back 5 payments from tenant)	Top up payment provided by SCDC to landlord to compensate for offering at LHA rate (based on average rent for area)	One-off thank you payment
1 bedroom	£5,400	£1,800	£1,000
2 bedroom	£5,700	£2,700	£1,000
3 bedroom	£6,750	£3,150	£1,000
4 bedroom	£8,700	£3,000	£1,000



Eligibility criteria:

1. Tenants: The scheme is open to Homes for Ukraine guests who are currently registered and residing within South Cambridgeshire.
2. Properties: The scheme is open to private landlords who own residential properties within South Cambridgeshire. The properties must meet basic standards of safety and liveability as defined by local housing regulations.
3. Rent control: Participating landlords who opt for a tenancy at market rate must agree to charge a reasonable and fair rent in line with prevailing market rates for comparable properties within South Cambridgeshire. Participating landlords who opt for a local housing allowance tenancy payment must agree to charge the local housing allowance rate for the type of property they are providing, in line with the local housing allowances rates within South Cambridgeshire.
4. Contract duration: Landlords must be prepared to offer a contract of 6 months. Afterwards, if the landlord wishes to keep their tenants, they can opt to offer a further 6-month tenancy. A new offer and acceptance of tenancy means the landlord will qualify for a top-up payment.
5. Renewal process and eligibility for additional payments: When a Homes for Ukraine family group has been provided rental accommodation by a landlord for 18 months under the incentive scheme, the landlord will only qualify for a new incentive payment for a new family group if they have given first refusal to renew the tenancy with the existing tenants at no more than fair market rent. This offer to the existing tenant must be made at least 2 months before the incentive period ends.
6. Compliance: Landlords should comply with all relevant legal requirements and tenancy regulations during the rental period, as well as all safety requirements.
7. Agreement: Prior to participation in the scheme and before the payment is made, landlords and South Cambridgeshire District Council will sign a formal agreement outlining the terms and conditions of the incentive, rental arrangements, and responsibilities.



8. Participating landlords may only receive a maximum of two payment packages after their initial payment package is received. Additional packages after the first will not include the £1,000 thank you payment.

Application process:

1. Expression of interest: Landlords who are interested in participating in this scheme should contact the Homes for Ukraine Liaison Team through dedicated channels, such as email or the teams phone line. An online form embedded on SCDC website has been created to register interest. The email address is HFULiaison@Scambs.gov.uk and the phone number is 01954 713411.
2. Assessment: The landlords will need to provide documentation to show that the property is eligible to be used as a rental property. This will include providing gas safety certificates, an up-to-date energy performance certificate (EPC), confirm they will provide a legitimate tenancy agreement, and they can provide a right to rent booklet.
3. Approval: Upon receipt of relevant documentation and proof of eligibility, landlords will receive formal approval that they can participate in the landlord incentive scheme.
4. Placement: South Cambridgeshire District Council will work with its cohort of Homes for Ukraine guests to identify a suitable match for the rental property and connect them with the landlord. Landlords may also have been approached directly by a Ukrainian family who suggested they join this scheme. In this case, the match will have already taken place.
5. Payment: Once the tenancy agreement has been signed, and the Ukrainian family has moved into the property, the payment will be made directly to the landlord. This payment will be made via a BACS payment and can take 5-10 working days to show in their account.



Duration:

The Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive scheme will be implemented to run alongside the duration of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. There will be continuous review of uptake of the scheme and any wider impacts of the scheme on the private rented sector in South Cambridgeshire. The Council reserves the right to end the scheme at any point in time.

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Report to:	Cabinet
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cllr John Batchelor – Lead Cabinet Member for Housing
Lead Officer:	Kirstin Donaldson – Service Manager - Acquisitions & Development
Key Decision:	Yes

Affordable Housing Acquisition – 33 no. New Homes, Cottenham

Executive Summary

1. In February 2024 the opportunity arose for the New Build Team to bid to acquire a further 33 new homes on the 'Cottenham Grove' site in Cottenham parish.
2. The site has received planning consent, and the affordable homes available for acquisition meet the requirements of the S106 Agreement.
3. SCDC are already the Registered Provider for the 10no. affordable homes on one of the initial phases of the development.
4. SCDC submitted a competitive tender bid to Redrow Homes in February 2024. The offer was caveated that it was subject to any outstanding planning matters and due political process.
5. Redrow Homes have confirmed on 1 March 2024 that SCDC are the preferred bidder.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet approves this acquisition, authorising the Service Manager – Acquisitions and Development to proceed to contract with the developer (Redrow).
7. It is recommended the Cabinet approves the onward sale of the relevant Shared Ownership homes (4).

Details

8. This acquisition is for a total of 33 no. new build affordable homes. The schedule of accommodation is as follows:

TYPE	NO.	TENURE	STOCK CATEGORY
1 bed maisonette	6	Affordable Rent	Flat
2 bed house	19	Affordable Rent	House
3 bed house	4	Affordable Rent	House
3 bed house	4	Shared Ownership	House

9. The figure negotiated with Redrow for the acquisition of the above homes can be found in Appendix A Table 1 column A.
10. The full cost of the acquisition to the HRA is comprised of the negotiated sum (column A) plus all legal and professional costs, HRA overheads, SDLT, loan repayment costs, and a sum allocated to contingency. This full appraisal cost can be found in Appendix A Table 1 column B.
11. This expenditure would be comprised of Right to Buy Receipts, shared-ownership receipts, cash reserves and borrowing. The application of Right to Buy Receipts and Shared Ownership Receipts is laid out in Appendix A Table 2. The use of cash reserves and borrowing will be dependent upon the delivery programme, and the availability of internal borrowing at key payment dates.
12. This acquisition will be paid off in a maximum of 35 years, in line with the policy laid out in the New Build Council Housing Strategy (revised 2023).
13. The New Build Council Housing Strategy (revised 2023) set the target for the delivery of new council homes for 2023-24 and 2024-25 at 75 per year. The New Build Team currently deliver new homes via a process of S106 Acquisition, and 'Direct Delivery' on land currently owned by the Council.
14. Given the nature of the land held within the HRA, the process of direct delivery is slower and lacks the potential to deliver affordable homes at the scale required to meet the need and demand demonstrated by the Housing Register.
15. To meet local demand S106 Acquisition is currently the primary means by which the New Build Team are delivering affordable homes.
16. S106 Acquisitions are affordable homes that have been permissioned by the Local Planning Authority, the tenure mix having been agreed in consultation with the Housing Strategy Team.
17. Because the homes acquired in this way have already received planning consent, there is little scope for changing the specification of the homes acquired.
18. The majority of the affordable homes on this site will be completed in 2025-26.
19. Regarding the acquisition of S106 properties, SCDC have been advised by Freeths that the developer (in this instance Redrow Homes) have the extent of

'Exclusive Rights' sufficient to mean that SCDC may contract with them under the 'negotiated procedure without prior publication' without a competitive process under regulation 32 (b) iii of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

20. SCDC Procurement Manager advises: *"The developer has exclusive rights and so Section 32 (b) iii of the regulations would apply. This means that you are able to enter to into a contract with the party that has exclusive rights."*

21. Public Contracts Regulations state:

"Where the works, supplies or services can be supplied only by a particular economic operator for any of the following reasons:

- (i) the aim of the procurement is the creation of acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance;
- (ii) competition is absent for technical reasons;
- (iii) the protection of exclusive rights, including intellectual property rights"

Reasons for Recommendations

22. SCDC's Business Plan set the ambitious target to double the number of New Build Affordable Homes built annually.

23. Prior to the submission of bids for this site a full financial appraisal of this was undertaken which has been approved by Finance.

24. The scheme can be considered value for money in that it pays off in 35 years – within the limit of 45 set in the New Build Council Housing Strategy (revised 2023).

Options

1. Cabinet could approve this acquisition and authorise the Service Manager to proceed into contract and authorise the onward sale of shared ownership properties.
2. Cabinet could reject this acquisition.

Implications

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

Financial and Fraud Risk

26. Since the approved Capital Programme was published in February 2024, SCDC has accepted additional funding from the LAHF (Local Authority Housing Fund) of £1,868,000 for 10 more homes. £4,370,000 has been allocated for the acquisition of these homes. The current unallocated budget for New Build is £90,550,000

(ninety million, five hundred and fifty thousand pounds) over the next five years. This equates to £18,110,000 per year. This acquisition is therefore within our capital programme budget.

27. As stated above, 30% of this acquisition is to be funded by Right to Buy receipts. Failing to acquire new affordable housing risks failing to spend these receipts, which would be required to be returned to the Treasury with interest.

Legal

28. Please see paragraph 19 above. Regarding S106 Housing Acquisitions, Freeths have advised that in such instances as these the developer have the extent of 'Exclusive Rights' sufficient to mean that SCDC may contract with them under the 'negotiated procedure without prior publication' without a competitive process under regulation 32 (b) iii of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Risks/Opportunities

29. All commercially based investments and/or developments involve risk, and at each stage of the process the commitments made will be at risk as there can be no guarantee that the investment will be secured, or a fully successful development will be achieved. Moreover, the timing of the exercise can also be a critical factor in achieving optimum success, particularly in terms of market conditions, the state of the national economy and levels of investment confidence within the development industry.
30. There is a low-level risk in the current economic climate that development and construction companies could enter administration owing to rising costs. This risk is far greater for small firms, and unlikely in this instance. SCDC will undertake financial checks on development partners prior to contracting.
31. Owing to supply chain issues facing the construction sector there is a small risk that the longstop date for delivery could be exceeded. SCDC mitigate against this possibility in the contract which allows us to charge for any losses (rental income) incurred by such a delay.
32. Generally speaking, investment in property in this area is sound, particularly where there is no intention for onward sale (affordable rent).
33. Owing to the high value of market properties in South Cambridgeshire we have generally found that Shared Ownership properties which provide an affordable route to home ownership perform well in this area. To ensure quick sale of these properties and return of Capital Receipts, the New Build Team have procured and instructed a sales partner to sell these properties "off plot" where possible. In the unlikely event that we are unable to sell a shared ownership property, we could apply to the LPA for a Deed of Variation to switch its tenure to Affordable Rent, allowing us to recover a rental income.

Consultation responses

34. The Lead Member for Housing has been consulted and is supportive of this proposed acquisition.
35. The Local Ward Members have also been consulted. Councillor Wilson has provided the following feedback: *'The already acquired homes on this development have created a lot of interest from residents on local social media. When these additional homes become available, I'm sure that the residents will be very pleased at the opportunities for affordable housing that they will offer'*

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in

36. This acquisition will actively contribute to the Council's Business Plan commitment to deliver more affordable homes. It is important to us that we deliver new homes where people want to live, and this means delivering in our existing communities as well as at our strategic sites.

Appendices

Exempt Appendix A – Acquisition Costs – 33no. Affordable Homes Cottenham

Report Author:

Kirstin Donaldson – Service Manager – Acquisitions and Development

Telephone: (01954) 712908

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Agenda Item 13



Report to:	Cabinet
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cllr John Batchelor – Lead Cabinet Member for Housing
Lead Officer:	Kirstin Donaldson – Service Manager - Acquisitions & Development
Key Decision:	Yes

Affordable Housing Acquisition – 45 no. New Homes, Barrington

Executive Summary

1. In March 2024 the opportunity arose for the New Build Team to bid to acquire a further 45 new homes on the 'All Saints Gardens' site in Barrington parish.
2. The site has received planning consent, and the affordable homes available for acquisition meet the requirements of the S106 Agreement.
3. SCDC are already the Registered Provider for the 13no. affordable homes on one of the initial phases of the development.
4. SCDC submitted a competitive tender bid to Redrow Homes in March 2024. The offer was caveated that it was subject to any outstanding planning matters and due political process.
5. Redrow Homes have confirmed on 27th March 2024 that SCDC are the preferred bidder.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet approves this acquisition, authorising the Service Manager – Acquisitions and Development to proceed to contract with the developer (Redrow).
7. It is recommended the Cabinet approves the onward sale of the relevant Shared Ownership homes (13).

Details

8. This acquisition is for a total of 45 no. new build affordable homes. The schedule of accommodation is as follows:

TYPE	NO.	TENURE	STOCK CATEGORY
1 bed maisonette	12	Affordable Rent	Flat
2 bed flat	9	Affordable Rent	Flat
2 bed house	11	Affordable Rent	House
1 bed maisonette	2	Shared Ownership	Flat
2 bed house	7	Shared Ownership	House
3 bed house	4	Shared Ownership	House

9. The figure negotiated with Redrow for the acquisition of the above homes can be found in Appendix A Table 1 column A.
10. The full cost of the acquisition to the HRA is comprised of the negotiated sum (column A) plus all legal and professional costs, HRA overheads, SDLT, loan repayment costs, and a sum allocated to contingency. This full appraisal cost can be found in Appendix A Table 1 column B.
11. This expenditure would be comprised of Right to Buy Receipts, shared-ownership receipts, cash reserves and borrowing. The application of Right to Buy Receipts and Shared Ownership Receipts is laid out in Appendix A Table 2. The use of cash reserves and borrowing will be dependent upon the delivery programme, and the availability of internal borrowing at key payment dates.
12. This acquisition will be paid off in a maximum of 35 years, in line with the policy laid out in the New Build Council Housing Strategy (revised 2023).
13. The New Build Council Housing Strategy (revised 2023) set the target for the delivery of new council homes for 2023-24 and 2024-25 at 75 per year. The New Build Team currently deliver new homes via a process of S106 Acquisition, and 'Direct Delivery' on land currently owned by the Council.
14. Given the nature of the land held within the HRA, the process of direct delivery is slower and lacks the potential to deliver affordable homes at the scale required to meet the need and demand demonstrated by the Housing Register.
15. To meet local demand S106 Acquisition is currently the primary means by which the New Build Team are delivering affordable homes.

16. S106 Acquisitions are affordable homes that have been permissioned by the Local Planning Authority, the tenure mix having been agreed in consultation with the Housing Strategy Team.
17. Because the homes acquired in this way have already received planning consent, there is little scope for changing the specification of the homes acquired.
18. The majority of the affordable homes on this site will be completed in 2025-26.
19. Regarding the acquisition of S106 properties, SCDC have been advised by Freeths that the developer (in this instance Redrow Homes) have the extent of 'Exclusive Rights' sufficient to mean that SCDC may contract with them under the 'negotiated procedure without prior publication' without a competitive process under regulation 32 (b) iii of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
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 (i) the aim of the procurement is the creation of acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance;
 (ii) competition is absent for technical reasons;
 (iii) the protection of exclusive rights, including intellectual property rights"

Reasons for Recommendations

22. SCDC's Business Plan set the ambitious target to double the number of New Build Affordable Homes built annually.
23. Prior to the submission of bids for this site a full financial appraisal of this was undertaken which has been approved by Finance.
24. The scheme can be considered value for money in that it pays off in 35 years –within the limit of 45 set in the New Build Council Housing Strategy (revised 2023).

Options

1. Cabinet could approve this acquisition and authorise the Service Manager to proceed into contract and authorise the onward sale of shared ownership properties.
2. Cabinet could reject this acquisition.

Implications

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

Financial and Fraud Risk

26. Since the approved Capital Programme was published in February 2024, SCDC has accepted additional funding from the LAHF (Local Authority Housing Fund) of £1,868,000 for 10 more homes. £4,370,000 has been allocated for the acquisition of these homes. The current unallocated budget for New Build is £90,550,000 (ninety million, five hundred and fifty thousand pounds) over the next five years. This equates to £18,110,000 per year. This acquisition is therefore within our capital programme budget.
27. As stated above, 30% of this acquisition is to be funded by Right to Buy receipts. Failing to acquire new affordable housing risks failing to spend these receipts, which would be required to be returned to the Treasury with interest.

Legal

28. Please see paragraph 19 above. Regarding S106 Housing Acquisitions, Freeths have advised that in such instances as these the developer have the extent of 'Exclusive Rights' sufficient to mean that SCDC may contract with them under the 'negotiated procedure without prior publication' without a competitive process under regulation 32 (b) iii of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

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32. Generally speaking, investment in property in this area is sound, particularly where there is no intention for onward sale (affordable rent).
33. Owing to the high value of market properties in South Cambridgeshire we have generally found that Shared Ownership properties which provide an affordable route to home ownership perform well in this area. To ensure quick sale of these properties and return of Capital Receipts, the New Build Team have procured and instructed a sales partner to sell these properties “off plot” where possible. In the unlikely event that we are unable to sell a shared ownership property, we could apply to the LPA for a Deed of Variation to switch its tenure to Affordable Rent, allowing us to recover a rental income.

Consultation responses

34. The Lead Member for Housing has been consulted and is supportive of this proposed acquisition.
35. The Local Ward Member has also been consulted. They visited the site in January 2024 to see those acquired in phase 2 on this site and were positive in their comments at the time.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in

36. This acquisition will actively contribute to the Council’s Business Plan commitment to deliver more affordable homes. It is important to us that we deliver new homes where people want to live, and this means delivering in our existing communities as well as at our strategic sites.

Appendices

Exempt Appendix A – Acquisition Costs – 45no. Affordable Homes, Barrington Phase 3

Report Author:

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