



## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL PROTOCOL FOR CONSULTATION ON HOUSING ISSUES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Council is committed to making decisions in respect of its housing functions that are informed by and, wherever possible, reflect local aspirations and priorities. To this end before making any decisions in relation to specific housing issues that affect one or more parishes the Council will conduct a local consultation exercise in accordance with the following principles:

- 1) consultation will be carried out when proposals are at a formative stage
- 2) sufficient background details and supporting information together with reasons will be given for the proposals to permit intelligent consideration and response
- 3) adequate time will be given for a consideration and response
- 4) the outcome of the local consultation will be conscientiously taken into account in finalising any proposals

### **PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES**

In recognising the above the following consultation process will be observed by the Council:

- i) the Council will write to the Parish Council and Local Member(s) prior to any matter being referred to the Executive Director or Housing Portfolio Holder for a decision and/or recommendation to the Leader and Cabinet or Full Cabinet depending on the delegated powers within the Council's constitution on housing functions (including the disposal of land held for housing purposes).
- ii) the letter will clearly set out:
  - the issue and provide background to the proposal as well as relevant considerations.
  - whether further material is available to help inform local debate and, if so, details of sources of reference material and how they can be accessed will be provided.
  - details of the contact Officer in case there are further queries or questions
  - a timescale for when the matter will be considered by the decision-maker (if applicable) eg dates of Housing Portfolio Holder and/or Cabinet meetings.
- iii) in exceptional/special circumstances it may be appropriate for the contact Officer (or another member of staff) to attend a Parish Council meeting to help

facilitate discussion and assist with answering queries in order to help local representatives reach an informed decision. The Council will consider such requests individually and will exercise discretion over whether or not an Officer can attend based on the case presented and the capacity/resources available to meet with the request. The Executive Director will consider such requests and the requesting body will be notified of the outcome of the request within 5 working days of its receipt by the contact Officer.

iii) for most issues/proposals a period of 42 days will be provided for a response which can be submitted electronically by e-mail or by post or by hand. If the 42 day period would not enable the matter to be discussed at a properly constituted Parish Council meeting then further time can be allowed upon request. The time extension agreed will take into account normal Parish Council meeting cycles but should in any event be no more than 60 days in order that the Council can transact its business in an efficient and effective manner.

iv) for certain proposals eg a new Housing Strategy or major changes to the Council's Lettings Policy a 12 week period will be allowed in order to comply with relevant statutory guidance

v) the responses received following the local consultation exercise will be considered by the Executive Director and/or Housing Portfolio Holder and published decisions will be available to record the outcome, including how local views have been taken into account.

vi) the Parish Council and Local Member will be advised of the outcome in writing (e-mail or letter) by the named contact Officer as soon as possible but no later than 3 working days following any decision.

vii) in the event that a decision is to be made by the Leader/Cabinet then the report will contain details of the outcome of the local consultation process including expressed views and preferences

### **RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

In considering housing proposals/issues in addition to locally expressed views and priorities the Council will need to have regard to the following in reaching any decision:

- corporate objectives and priorities
- strategic housing objectives/HRA Business Plan
- financial considerations
- legal implications
- national targets/guidance in relation to housing and related issues eg planning
- partnerships and shared objectives as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement

In the event that local views are expressed on a particular issue by an individual or body eg Residents Association these should be directed through the Parish Council and Local Member in order that a fully informed local view can be reached by the District and Parish Council representatives although any response should reflect the wider interests of the Parish. If there is any difference in local opinion within the Parish this can be clearly set out in the response. However, the Council will not preclude individuals and or local interest groups from also making their own

representations although they will not be formally consulted as part of this protocol. It should also be noted that the Council would, in many circumstances, also consult individuals on an issue where they would be directly affected by any proposal in addition to local elected representatives eg Council tenants.

### **CONSULTATION ISSUES**

The following scenarios are provided to illustrate when a local consultation exercise may be carried out in relation to housing related proposals together with indicative timescales for responses for each:

- a) disposal of Council owned amenity or garden land to individuals - 42 days
- b) disposal of Council land/property for development purposes (including for affordable housing) – 42 days
- c) options appraisal for an individual or a group of Council-owned properties within a parish – 42 days
- d) the Housing Strategy – 12 weeks
- e) Homelessness Strategy – 12 weeks
- f) major changes to the Council's Lettings Policy – 12 weeks
- g) variations in Conditions of Tenancy that apply to secure tenants – 12 weeks

Please note that the above list is not intended to be exhaustive. Further it should be stressed that consultation on potential rural exception sites to provide affordable housing for local people to meet identified needs will be conducted in accordance with planning as well as housing policy and local arrangements will vary and be subject to agreement and therefore not be subject to this protocol.

**APRIL 2007**