

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Cabinet  
**AUTHOR/S:** Executive Director

9 July 2007

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### HOUSING FUTURES UPDATE

#### Purpose

1. To seek Cabinet's endorsement for changes in tenant participation arrangements in the Housing Futures project, following the response to the letter sent to all Council tenants.

#### Background

2. At its April meeting, Cabinet agreed that a new housing stock options appraisal be carried out to evaluate the options to deliver a sustainable future for the Council's housing stock with the involvement of tenants, staff, members and other key stakeholders. Cabinet also agreed that a member / tenant working group be established to oversee the project, supported by a corporate officer support team, to be comprised of five members, appointed in accordance with the political proportionality rules, and five tenants.
3. On 14 June 2007 all tenants of the Council received a letter from the Executive Director seeking their views about the Housing Futures project and inviting them to become involved in the Tenant Participation Group and the Housing Futures Working Group (HFWG). Candidates for the latter were invited to complete a nomination form in the event that more than five tenants were nominated for the five tenant places on the Working Group.

#### Considerations

4. Nominations for the Housing Futures Working Group were confirmed on Tuesday 3 July (a short delay was allowed for receipt as a consequence of the postal strike on Friday 29 June) and fifteen nominations had been received. Over 1500 tenants have completed and returned their Housing Futures questionnaires.
5. The Housing Options Portfolio Holder is minded, in view of the number of nominations received, that all fifteen tenants be invited to participate in the Housing Futures project, and that a ballot to select them is not necessary.
6. A decision to vary the tenant participation arrangements is required by Cabinet urgently as the first meetings of the Housing Futures Working Group are scheduled prior to Cabinet's next meeting in September.

#### Options

7. Proceed to an election of five tenant representatives as originally recommended at a cost of £6,000.
8. Alternatively all fifteen tenant nominees could be invited to join the Housing Futures Working Group, alongside the five elected members.

## Implications

9. The second of the above options enables all of the tenants who have expressed an interest to become more closely involved in the Housing Futures project and would eliminate the need for a ballot, the cost of which is estimated at £6,000.
10. Members are reminded that the first phase of the Housing Futures project is to consider the future housing options and to evaluate alternatives. If the Council decides at the end of the first phase to consider further the transfer of its housing to a housing association then a tenant ballot would be held in which all tenants of the Council would express their preference. Only if a transfer proposal was supported by a majority of tenants in such a ballot would transfer proceed.

11. Financial	If a ballot to select tenant members of the HFWG were to be held its cost would be approximately £6,000.
Legal	There is no legal requirement to involve tenants at this stage of the options appraisal but it is expected by the Department for Communities and Local Government as good practice.
Staffing	
Risk Management	
Equal Opportunities	The proposal to extend tenant involvement in the Housing Futures project will enable a broader group of tenants to get involved in the project.

## Consultations

12. This matter has arisen as a consequence of the Council's consultation with its 5900 tenants. It is proposed that further discussion with the Tenant Participation Group on the Housing Futures project takes place at its next meeting.

## Conclusions / Summary

13. Cabinet agreed in April to establish a five member, five tenant working group to oversee the Housing Futures project. Following consultation with all the Council's tenants, fifteen have put themselves forward to join the Housing Futures Working Group. This report suggests that all fifteen tenants be invited to join the Housing Futures Working Group.
14. The proposals will enable more active tenant involvement in the Housing Futures Working Group and will save the costs of a ballot for tenants to elect their representatives.

## Recommendations

15. That the fifteen candidates be invited to join the Housing Futures Working Group (HFWG).
16. That all the tenant representatives on the HFWG be invited to participate in the appointment of the Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA).

**Contact Officer:** Steve Hampson – Executive Director  
Telephone: (01954) 713151