

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Wednesday, 17 October 2012 at 5.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Mark Howell

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors: Bunty Waters

Opposition spokesmen: Mark Hersom

Also in attendance: Mervyn Loynes and Ben Shelton

Officers:

Jenny Clark	Lands Officer
Gill Anderton	Resident Involvement Officer
Julie Fletcher	Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader
Anita Goddard	Housing Operational Services Manager
Stephen Hills	Affordable Homes Director
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer
Heather Wood	Housing Advice and Options Manager

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mark Howell declared a personal interest as an employee of the Papworth Trust, a charity that includes a Registered Social Landlord.

Councillor Ben Shelton declared a personal interest as an employee of a letting agent in Cambridge.

10. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Housing Portfolio Holder signed, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2012.

11. HINXTON: SALE OF GARAGE SITE, DUXFORD ROAD

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking an open market sale of the garage site off Duxford Road, Hinxton, as outlined on the plan.

The Lands Officer reported that there had been some interest shown informally for enhancing the site for garage use. The Portfolio Holder insisted that any transfer of the land should be subject to an uplift clause protecting the Council's interest should the land subsequently be sold on at a profit.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **instructed** officers to sell the garage site off Duxford Road, Hinxton on the open market, for garage use only and subject to an uplift clause.

12. TENANCY STRATEGY

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking approval for the adoption of the Tenancy Strategy, and the launch of the Strategic Housing Information Portal (SHIP).

The Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader informed those present that the

Council was legally obliged to establish a Tenancy Strategy. Anyone would be able to access the associated website.

The Housing Director said that, while the Strategy would stand alongside those of other Councils (including those without a Council housing stock), it had not been possible to develop a sub regional strategy at this stage due to the differing positions of neighbouring local authorities. However, it was noted that the Interim Statement published previously outlining the Council's position in relation to the new delivery model for affordable housing had been used as a template by neighbouring authorities and was an excellent example of partnership working. It was noted that the Strategy's aim was to provide guidance to social landlords and was not legally enforceable.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **approved** the Tenancy Strategy as set out in Appendix B and the development of the Strategic Housing Information Portal.

13. **TENANCY POLICY**

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking approval of the Council's new Tenancy Policy.

The Housing Operational Services Manager reminded the Portfolio Holder that he had first considered the Tenancy Policy at his meeting in March 2012 (Minute 74 refers).

The Portfolio Holder considered the options set out in paragraph 16 of the report. At Option 1, he asked how the concept of disability would be defined. In reply, the Housing Operational Services Manager said that the principle determining factor would be whether or not someone needed specially adapted property. The Portfolio Holder decided to agree to the change recommended in the report.

Those present discussed Option 2 in the context of Housing Benefit changes relating to under-occupation. It was noted that when the initial ten-year tenancy ended, a review would be conducted to determine whether more appropriate accommodation was available. If there was none, it was likely that the tenancy would be renewed. The aim was to make best use of the available housing stock.

The Housing Portfolio Holder agreed with Councillors Ben Shelton and Bunty Waters that introductory tenancies (Option 3) should be introduced as good practice enabling tenancy management issues arising in the first year of a tenancy to be dealt with quickly and effectively.

With regard to Succession (Option 4), the Housing Portfolio Holder informed those present that Papworth Trust tenancies contained a clause allowing the landlord to re-house (where available) the able-bodied survivor of a deceased tenant of an adapted property.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **approved** the Tenancy Policy including the following elements

1. Secure tenancies for older people and disabled people

To retain secure 'lifetime' tenancies for all offers of housing to older people (aged 65+) and disabled people (long term disability requiring a specially adapted property).

2. Secure tenancies for all other people

To discontinue offering secure 'lifetime' tenants and offer flexible tenancies for a fixed period of 10 years. Twelve months before the end of the flexible tenancy we will commence the review process. Tenants will not be asked to move unless suitable

alternative accommodation that meets their needs can be found

3. Introductory tenancies

To introduce introductory tenancies to all new tenants except those transferring internally where they previously held a secure tenancy or those transferring from an external provider where they previously held a secure or assured tenancy.

4. Succession

To allow only one succession for spouses and partners, subject to finding the successor alternative accommodation if they no longer need a property that had been specially adapted.

14. LETTINGS POLICY - AMENDMENTS

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report on the new lettings policy.

Those present discussed the subject generally, focussing on the concept of 'local connection' and number of working hours.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **approved** the amendments to the Lettings Policy subject to clarification of paragraph 3.3.1 (a) and (f) and paragraph 5.5.1 in relation to a child.

15. SERVICE PLANS 2013-14

The Housing Portfolio Holder **noted** progress with the Affordable Homes Service Plan 2013-14.

16. TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP

There was no presentation under this heading.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 16 January 2013, starting at 5.30pm.

18. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Housing Portfolio Holder **resolved** that the Press, public and all officers except the Housing Director and Democratic Services Officer be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act).

19. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HALL CATERING SERVICE

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report on the future of the catering service at South Cambs Hall.

The Director of Housing summarised the circumstances giving rise to the current review, and highlighted the options for achieving cost savings for the Council. Those present discussed a number of issues arising from the report, including the implications of redundancy and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, and agreed that change was needed in order to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The Portfolio Holder asked that every effort be made to maximise opportunities for the local economy, and to reassure those affected by the review be they employees working in the canteen or users of the service.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **instructed** officers to market test the catering service at South Cambs Hall in order to reduce the current costs to the General Fund and to seek improvements in the quality of the service.

The Meeting ended at 7.05 p.m.
