

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Wednesday, 20 March 2013 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: Ben Shelton

Officers:

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

30. 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

31. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Housing Portfolio Holder signed, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2013..

32. GT CHISHILL: TRANSFER OF TRACK TO WALLER'S CLOSE

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a further report in reviewing his previous decision in relation to the transfer of land at Waller's Close, Great Chishill (Minute 23 refers).

The issue had been brought back to the Portfolio Holder because of concerns expressed by Great and Little Chishill Parish Council. However, it was noted that nobody from the Parish Council was in attendance to expand on those concerns.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **reaffirmed but modified** his decision of 23 January 2013 (Minute 23 refers)

1. -to transfer the freehold of the track at the end of Waller's Close, Great Chishill at Nil cost to the owner of the rabbit sanctuary land at the rear, following repairs paid for by South Cambridgeshire District Council to the track surface, the transfer to include a covenant restricting the use of the track to serve the rabbit sanctuary land only either in its existing use or for agricultural use only; and
2. that, should the track be used in future for commercial or housing development on

private land rather than solely for charitable purposes or for agricultural use, the owner must apply to South Cambridgeshire District Council for release of the restrictive covenant. If this is agreed, it will be subject to the owner paying to the Council any increase in the value of the access from Waller's Close.

33. BASSINGBOURN: DISPOSAL OF GARAGE SITES OFF MILL LANE

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking his agreement for the disposal of the District Council's garage site off Mill Lane, Bassingbourn as outlined red on the plan.

Councillor Nigel Cathcart, a local Member for Bassingbourn, said that the former public house adjacent to the garage site had been a popular village facility in the past, and expressed the community's aspiration that, one day, it might re-open. He urged the Portfolio Holder therefore to retain the garage site with that aspiration in mind, at least for six months to establish whether re-opening the public house and using the garage site as an ancillary parking area was economically viable. The Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee said that, realistically, 12 – 18 months might be needed to determine the former pub's future and that there would also be a benefit for the community in selling the garage site for £100,000.

Councillor Bunty Waters was eager to see some evidence of intent.

The Portfolio Holder observed that retaining the garage site would impose a financial liability on South Cambridgeshire District Council. However, he was prepared to allow six months to see whether re-opening the pub was practical and, if not, then to re-consider the issue following a re-valuation of the land.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **deferred** making a decision for six months to allow time for interested parties to put together a business case for the site and the former public house adjacent to it to be redeveloped for use by the community of Bassingbourn. Tenancies of the garages on site would be ended within the next six months and, after that time, the Housing Portfolio Holder would decide whether to authorise a community use or exercise his power to sell following a reassessment of the land value.

34. CUSTOMER COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking his approval for a '*Handling of Customer Compliments, Comments and Complaints*' Policy, specifically for Affordable Homes, in order to be compliant with the Localism Act 2011 and include the Housing Ombudsman and designated persons / tenant panel.

Those present sought and received clarification about the terminology and functionality of the new scheme and were told that, in practical terms, there would be no significant change from the current process. However, there would probably be a compulsory membership fee for using the Housing Ombudsman from 2014/15, estimated at £9,000.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **approved** the Handling of Customer compliments, comments and complaints" Policy as set out in Appendix A

35. HOUSING SERVICE PLAN

The Housing Portfolio Holder received and noted the Affordable Homes Service Plan 2013/14 – 2015/16.

With regard to establishing “a Council ‘back to work’ project and...apprenticeships across the district to equip...young people for productive life”, the Portfolio Holder stated his expectation that Apprenticeships should be “proper jobs”.

36. HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY - 12 MONTH REVIEW

The Housing Portfolio Holder **received and noted** a report updating him about progress of the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) 12 months after the establishment of the shared service.

The Portfolio Holder noted the steady improvement in performance but reiterated that savings should be ploughed back into the service. His main concern continued to be delays caused by the lack of Occupational Therapists.

37. TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP

Wendy Head, (TPG Chair) and Luisa Sartini-Baldwin (TPG member and Linchpin project worker) addressed the Housing Portfolio Holder and those present at the meeting.

38. FORWARD PLAN

The Housing Portfolio Holder noted the Forward Plan.

39. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Housing Portfolio Holder meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday 19 June 2013 starting at 5.30pm.

The Meeting ended at 7.00 p.m.
