

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on  
Wednesday, 15 October 2014 at 5.30 p.m.

**Portfolio Holder:** Mark Howell

**Councillors in attendance:** Val Barrett, Anna Bradnam, Kevin Cuffley, Alison Elcox, Jose Hales, Hazel Smith, Bunty Waters

**Also in attendance:**

Usma Ali	Housing Development Officer
Julie Fletcher	Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader
Anita Goddard	Head of Housing and Property Services
Wendy Head	Chairman, Tenant Participation Group
Stephen Hills	Director of Housing
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer
Victoria Wallace	Democratic Services Officer
Paul Williams	Equality and Diversity Officer
Heather Wood	Housing Advice and Options Manager

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

### **3. FLATS AND HOUSES AT 1-14 FAIRVIEW LONGSTANTON (KEY)**

The Housing Development Officer presented the report which set out the future options for the redevelopment of the flats and houses at 1-14 Fairview, Longstanton.

The Portfolio Holder noted the following:

- The local member for Longstanton had been involved in the consultation process regarding the options for the site, and supported the proposed preferred option.
- Housing Officers had worked very closely with tenants who had to be rehoused. Tenants had been rehoused as per their wishes with some rehoused within the village and others outside the village where this interest had been expressed.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **APPROVED** the recommended Option C; to dispose of the site at Fairview Longstanton to Icen Homes/Hundred Houses Society for nil value, to enable the development of an affordable housing scheme.

### **4. REQUEST FOR DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO PROCURE A NEW CONTRACT FOR THE SUB-REGIONAL HOME-LINK SCHEME**

The Housing Advice and Options Manager presented the report requesting delegated authority to procure a new contract for the sub-regional Home-Link scheme, in partnership

with the other local authorities in Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk.

The Director of Housing explained that this was not a key decision as it did not affect the Council's budget, with the cost of procurement factored into the existing budget.

Discussion ensued:

- Only those who could demonstrate a strong local connection to South Cambridgeshire were eligible to apply to the Council's Housing Register.
- The Home-Link scheme allowed for a proportion of allocations to be cross partner allocations, which provides applicants the opportunity to move within the sub-region.
- Clarity was sought on whether the terms of choice based lettings were reviewed. It was confirmed that the terms of partnership and engagement were reviewed on a regular basis by the Home-Link Management Board.

The Portfolio Holder **APPROVED** the recommendation to procure a new contract for the sub-regional Home-Link scheme in the current financial year (2014/15).

## 5. REVIEW OF HRA FUNDED AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

The Head of Housing and Property Services presented the report which sought approval of the revised Aids and Adaptations policy, subject to further consultation with the Tenant Participation Group, and permission to employ an in-house Occupational Therapist. The Director of Housing clarified that this was not a key decision.

The Housing Portfolio Holder was informed that since the writing of the report, the Tenant Participation Group had been consulted on the revised Aids and Adaptations policy.

The employment of an in-house Occupational Therapist was discussed, the following comments were made:

- Support was expressed for the employment of an in-house Occupational Therapist, as this would enable the Council to provide a holistic housing service.
- The Head of Housing and Property Services confirmed that residents would not be moved from their homes if they did not want to be. The service worked to keep people in their communities, with their existing support networks.
- The in-house Occupational Therapist's salary would be funded by revenue funding from the HRA fund.
- The in-house Occupational Therapist would work to match people with appropriately adapted homes.
- Through the current service, residents had to wait 18 weeks to receive an assessment. The aim was to reduce this to a two week waiting time by employing an in-house Occupational Therapist. Some concern was raised over the sustainability of this challenging target and it was clarified that this was an aspirational target for an initial assessment, which could be reviewed if found to be unsustainable.
- The NHS would continue to be used as a triage service.

The Aids and Adaptations Policy was discussed and the following comments were made:

- Clarification regarding the under occupation of property by two or more bedrooms was sought. The Head of Housing and Property Services confirmed that this referred to one person or a couple in a three bedroomed house and clarified that the Housing Benefit regulations only applied to people under the age of 65. Therefore if older couples required two bedrooms for medical reasons, the Housing Benefit rules would not apply.
- The definition of serious rent arrears was queried. The Head of Housing and

Property Services clarified that this would be arrears that had reached approximately four months. The Portfolio Holder expressed concern that people should not be excluded from housing if illness or disability had prevented them from paying their rent, and was assured that the circumstances of each individual were always considered.

The Portfolio Holder **APPROVED:**

- a) The revised Aids and Adaptations policy.
- b) The employment of an in-house Occupational Therapist.

## **6. HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY UPDATE**

The Director of Housing presented the report which provided a review of the progress of the Cambs Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) shared service, following two years of operation.

Portfolio Holder approval was sought for the extension of the current Shared Service Agreement by a further twelve months to 31 March 2016. This would allow for improvements to be embedded and would also allow time for East Cambridgeshire and Fenland to be approached regarding joining the partnership. The Portfolio Holder was informed that Cambridge City and Huntingdonshire District Council had approved the extension of the current Shared Service Agreement by a further twelve months to 31 March 2016.

Results of the CHIA Customer Satisfaction Survey were highlighted and the Portfolio Holder commended the levels of satisfaction achieved. Whilst the survey reflected that 84% of customers' expectations had been fully met, it was recognised that 16% of these only had their expectations partly met. The issue of high expectations and managing these was discussed; with the need to make the best use of public money, the service focussed on providing customers with what they needed rather than what they necessarily wanted according to their expectations.

The Portfolio Holder **APPROVED:**

- a) The extension of the current Shared Service Agreement by a further twelve months to 31 March 2016.
- b) The adoption of the key performance indicator:  
Average time (in weeks) between date of referral to practical completion for minor jobs up to £10k.
- c) The preparation of an Outline Business Case for the expansion of a county-wide service, with final agreement being subject to agreement by Cabinet in 2015.

## **7. AFFORDABLE HOMES DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2015/16**

The housing Performance Improvement Team Leader presented an update on the revised Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2015/16.

One of the products identified was to look at how money received in lieu of affordable housing was spent, in particular the £2 million funding received from Papworth Everard. It was clarified that this had to be spent within 5 years of receipt and any unspent funds had to be returned. The money would be spent on new affordable housing and could not be used to build housing in Papworth Everard. Councillor Jose Hales would discuss a potential project to be funded by this with the Portfolio Holder, outside the meeting.

The Head of Housing and Property Services confirmed that the Council wanted to use renewables on all housing, where appropriate.

Digital Inclusion was discussed. It was recognised that there were issues around achieving this as some residents could not afford broadband and others, particularly the more elderly population, did not want broadband.

The Portfolio Holder **ENDORSED** the service plan actions identified in the report.

## 8. **EQUALITY SCHEME 2012-2015 (2014-2015 UPDATE)**

The Equality and Diversity Officer presented the Council's updated Equality Scheme 2012-2015, which was discussed:

- The categories listed on page 5 of the policy were the nine protected characteristics according to national regulations.
- The Gypsy and Traveller population in the district is based on local intelligence rather than the national Census statistics, as it was felt that the Census may not have provided a true reflection of the Gypsy and Traveller community in South Cambridgeshire.
- The Equality and Diversity Officer clarified that the Staff Survey was not mandatory for staff to complete.
- The Equality and Diversity Officer confirmed that officers were carrying out Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) and explained the Council's process for completing an EIA.

The Portfolio Holder **AGREED** the 2014-2015 update of the Council's Equality Scheme 2012-2015.

## 9. **TENANT SCRUTINY REPORT ON THE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE**

This was an information item presenting the Tenant Participation Group's (TPG) Scrutiny Review of the Ground Maintenance Service. The Director of Housing and the Portfolio Holder thanked the Chair of the Tenant Participation Group for all the work that had been undertaken by the group and for their professionalism. Both were very grateful for the TPG's input and for the recommendations they had made in the report.

Recommendation 13 regarding the redevelopment of garage sites was discussed. The Director of Housing confirmed that a garage site strategy was in place.

The Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the report and thanked the Tenant Participation Group for the report.

## 10. **TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP**

The Chair of the Tenant Participation Group (TPG) provided a verbal update on the work of the TPG. The Portfolio Holder was informed that the group had been discussing further areas for scrutiny, which would be announced following the next Tenant Scrutiny Group meeting.

The Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the update and thanked the Chair of the TPG for attending the meeting.

## 11. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the up to date work programme.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting date of Wednesday 18 March 2015 was agreed. The potential need for a further meeting to take place in December 2014 or January 2015 would be discussed outside the meeting.

---

**The Meeting ended at 7.00 p.m.**

---

---

---