

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on  
Wednesday, 27 January 2016 at 5.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Mark Howell

### **Councillors in attendance:**

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitor: Bunty Waters  
Opposition spokesmen: Anna Bradnam, Jose Hales, Philippa Hart, Hazel Smith  
Also in attendance: Val Barrett, Kevin Cuffley, Lynda Harford, David McCraith, Ben Shelton

### **Officers:**

Anita Goddard Housing Operational Services Manager  
Stephen Hills Director of Housing  
Julie Fletcher Head of Housing Strategy

Wendy Head, Chairman of the Tenant Participation Group was also in attendance

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

Councillor Mark Howell declared a non-pecuniary interest as an employee of the Papworth Trust.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

### **3. SHELTERED HOUSING ALARM SYSTEM AND CHARGING REVIEW**

The Housing and Operational Services Manager presented the report which sought to inform the Portfolio Holder on the need to upgrade the current emergency alarm systems and the changes to funding of the hardwired alarm systems in the Council's designated sheltered housing schemes.

The following points were clarified:

- There was an obligation for designated sheltered housing sites to provide leaseholders with an alarm system but that no reference of cost was made.
- Lifeline smoke alarm systems alerted the Contact Centre when activated.
- If an alarm system were not provided, the site would lose its designation as a sheltered housing site. This would put it at risk of the Right to Buy legislation.
- Leaseholders who took up the alarm system would be encouraged to put some of their attendance allowance towards the £3 weekly charge for the system.
- Council housing tenants were also offered Lifeline alarm systems but the charging for these was different. Members were informed that any housing could have a Lifeline system installed by the Council.

The Local Member for Milton informed members of another option of an alarm system that worked through a mobile telephone. The Portfolio Holder agreed that whatever decision was made, that leaseholders should be made aware of this as an option.

Some concern was raised on the Lifeline alarm system's total reliance on a fixed

telephone line and the implications if this were to fail. The Local Member for the Shelfords and Stapleford sought assurance that in the event of this happening, the preferred telephone service would be used to inform next of kin or another appropriate person of any issue with the telephone line. The Portfolio Holder provided assurance that this would be put in place, however it was also highlighted that there was a responsibility for the person with the alarm to test it once a month. On sheltered housing estates, the estate manager carried out this testing for residents.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **APPROVED**:

- 1) Option A – To change the alarm systems to the Lifeline system.
- 2) Option E – To advise residents that from 1 April 2016 all will be liable to pay £3 per week for the alarm service whether they are on benefits or not.
- 3) Option F – Give residents the option of not having an alarm and therefore not having to pay for a system unless they opt for a Lifeline system.
- 4) Option G – Where the resident has no telephone line for the Council to bear the cost of installing the line and either adding a weekly charge to the alarm charge or passing responsibility to the tenant if they wish to use the line for any other reason than an alarm system.
- 5) Option I – Charge sheltered residents £3 per week to encourage take up and ensure the scheme remains a designated sheltered housing scheme.

Regarding the cost of the system to residents, until the break even point was reached in providing the system, the Portfolio Holder delegated decision making to officers with regard to increases in cost.

#### 4. **TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP**

The Portfolio Holder was informed that the Tenant Participation Group would be commencing a piece of scrutiny work in April or May 2016. The subject of this was to be finalised.

#### 5. **HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER WORK PROGRAMME**

The Housing Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the work programme.

#### 6. **TRANSFER/SALE OF LAND AT OSP 148, CHURCH LANE, GREAT EVERS DEN**

This was a confidential report discussed in closed session. Members present all expressed their support for the preferred option.

The Housing Portfolio Holder:

- a) **APPROVED** the transfer of land to Accent Nene at nil value
- b) **AGREED** a commuted sums grant of £100,000 to support the financial viability of the provision of ten affordable homes (Option A).

#### 7. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 16 May 2016 at 5.30pm.

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**The Meeting ended at 6.15 p.m.**

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