

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Wednesday, 17 June 2015 at 5.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Mark Howell

Councillors in attendance: Anna Bradnam, Grenville Chamberlain, Kevin Cuffley, Lynda Harford, Philippa Hart, Janet Lockwood, David McCraith, Hazel Smith, Bunty Waters

Officers in attendance:
Gill Anderton Head of Housing Development (New Build)
Tracey Cassidy Supported Housing Manager
Julie Fletcher Head of Housing Strategy and Development
Anita Goddard Housing Operational Services Manager
Julie Fletcher Housing Performance Improvement Team Leader

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 March 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

3. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY AND PROCEDURE STATEMENT

The Head of Housing and Property Services presented the revised Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure for responding to nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

The Portfolio Holder and Members were informed that the majority of anti-social behaviour was noise related. The service had seen an increase in cases due to mental health issues.

Comments, questions and discussion regarding the policy were:

- Action when Housing Association tenants were causing an anti-social behaviour issue that was affecting Council tenants was queried. It was clarified that in such cases the Council could intervene using its own team to deal with the matter and charge the Housing Association for this. Members were informed that the Council's team was often asked to deal with anti-social behaviour cases on behalf of the Housing Association, for which the Council then billed the Housing Association.
- Members were assured that a multi-agency approach was taken with complex cases and that the Council worked very closely with social services where vulnerable people were involved.
- Members were informed that the Neighbourhood Support Team were trained mediators.
- Members requested they be informed of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts being implemented in their communities, so they could respond to any local queries regarding this.

Overall the Housing Portfolio Holder agreed with the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and

Procedure, however **RECOMMENDED** that further work was undertaken to make it more concise, and that it be brought back to a future Housing Portfolio Holder meeting for decision. Furthermore the policy should include that local Members were to be informed of when Acceptable Behaviour Contracts were implemented in their communities.

4. **SOCIAL HOUSING TENANCY FRAUD POLICY**

The Head of Housing and Property Services presented the Social Housing Tenancy Fraud Policy. Comments and discussion regarding the policy were:

- It was felt the policy was too concise and that some further detail was needed.
- Faking of a disability should be included in the examples of what fraud could be.
- It was clarified that having a lodger was allowed as long as tenants informed the Council of this. Tenants could keep any money earned from having a lodger.
- No issues relating to people trafficking had yet been seen in relation to houses of multiple occupancy.
- Members expressed their appreciation for the work of the Tenancy Fraud Officer.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **APPROVED** the Social Tenancy Fraud Policy subject to the addition of some further detail to the policy.

5. **COMMUNAL FACILITIES USE AND CHARGING POLICY**

The Supported Housing Manager presented the Communal Facilities Use and Charging Policy.

Comments and discussion regarding the policy were:

- It was clarified that Council sheltered housing tenants did not have to pay to use communal rooms at the sheltered housing schemes.
- Sheltered housing tenants had access to key safes in order to be able to access the communal rooms.
- Estate Officers kept the details of all external groups who used the communal rooms.
- It would be left up to the sheltered housing tenants whether the communal rooms would be advertised.
- During the communal room charging pilot phase, no external groups had stopped using the communal rooms despite having to pay.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **APPROVED** the adoption of the Communal Facilities Use and Charging Policy.

6. **TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP**

The Chairman of the Tenant Participation Group (TPG) provided an update on the TPG:

- The Tenant Participation Group had been busy with its latest piece of scrutiny work reviewing sheltered housing and support. Part of this had looked at the role of Sheltered Housing Wardens. The review's findings had been presented on 16 June 2015. Recommendations would be made to the Housing Portfolio Holder for consideration.
- Clarification was provided around the roles of Visiting Support Officers and Estate Officers. The Head of Housing and Property Services clarified that Visiting Support Officers visited people on sheltered housing schemes and were tenure neutral. Estate Officers were funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). These Officers were on call usually covered four sites. All Residents had the contact number for the Estate Officer, which was also included in the monthly Tenant

Participation Group newsletter. Estate Officers were responsible for the fabric of the building but would also help residents if needed.

The Housing Portfolio Holder thanked the Chairman of the Tenant Participation Group for her update.

7. FORWARD PLAN

The Housing Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the work programme and advised members that a further Portfolio Holder meeting may be held in December. A meeting may also be held when information came out on Right to Buy regarding Housing Associations. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development would be organising this meeting and it may be called at short notice if required.

8. NEW BUILD STRATEGY (COUNCIL HOMES) 2015-2018

The meeting moved to private session and the Head of Housing Development (New Build) presented the confidential report.

In considering the report and all the options for decision, comments and discussion regarding the report were:

- Councillor Lynda Harford raised the importance of land being put forward for Gypsy and Travellers. It was noted that the Council House New Build Strategy could not influence this.
- The importance of the rebalancing of housing supply to offset welfare benefit changes was highlighted.
- Members were informed that the delivery of affordable housing on exception sites was driven by several factors, including the availability of land, the housing need in the village, the support of local residents and parishes, and Planning. This was underpinned by the requirement to deliver the affordable housing numbers assumed in the Local Plan as well as an additional 1000 new build homes as part of the City Deal.

The Housing Portfolio Holder :

- a) **APPROVED** the refreshed New Build Strategy 2015-18 (at Appendix 1).
- b) **APPROVED** affordable rent levels for new build properties that do not exceed the Local Housing Allowance cap, which is equivalent to approximately 65-70% (Option C).
- c) **APPROVED** the principle for the potential to build market sale homes to support the financial viability of schemes.
- d) **NOTED** the Affordable Housing Delivery Programme 2015/18 and the financial viability defaults.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on 21 October 2015 at 5.30pm.

The Meeting ended at 7.15 p.m.
