

## **Cabinet**

**Tuesday, 22 March 2022**

### **Decisions**

Set out below is a summary of the decisions taken at the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 22 March 2022. Decisions made by the Cabinet will be subject to call-in. Recommendations made to the Council are not subject to call-in. The wording used does not necessarily reflect the actual wording that will appear in the minutes.

If you have any queries about any matters referred to in this decision sheet please contact Jonathan Malton.

#### **1. Q3 Performance Report**

Cabinet:

- a) **Noted** the KPI results and comments at Appendix A and progress against Business Plan actions at Appendix B
- b) **Noted** the reduction in target in relation to Land Charges Search Response Days, as part of a phased return to pre-Covid target level by the new financial year, as detailed within the comments section at SX025 at Appendix A.

**Options Considered:** Cabinet could have:

Recommended any actions required to address issues identified

**Reason for Decision:** These recommendations are required to enable management and members to understand the organisation's performance. The information included within performance reports contributes to the evidence base for the ongoing review of priorities and enables, where appropriate, redirection of resources to reflect emerging priorities and address areas of concern.

#### **2. Annual Equality Scheme Update and Progress Report**

Cabinet:

- a) **Approved** adoption of the revised Equality Scheme at Appendix A.
- b) **Reviewed** the Equality Scheme action plan progress report at Appendix B, detailing progress against actions set in the 2020-21 iteration of the Equality Scheme.

**Options Considered:** Cabinet could have:

Not approved the Equality Scheme Update, and requested further amendments

**Reason for Decision:** To ensure that SCDC has an Equality Scheme that provides a current and effective framework for the ongoing completion of activities to progress Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with the organisation and

the wider district.

### 3. **Parental Leave Policy for Councillors**

Cabinet:

**Recommend** to Council the adoption of this policy.

This is a recommendation to Council, and not subject to call-in.

**Options Considered:** Cabinet could have:

Declined the recommendation to Council to implement the policy.

**Reason for Decision:** The policy will have an overall positive impact by delivering parental leave entitlement for Members in a clear and transparent way, guaranteeing they retain their elected office and continue to receive their allowances. Further, this eliminates any risk of direct discrimination arising from being a new parent.

Even though there is no legal requirement to implement this policy, there are significant benefits as it supports the Council's Equality Scheme objectives and may contribute to improving the diversity of election candidates and long-term retention of Members.

### 4. **2021/2022 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring (Quarter 3)**

Cabinet:

- a) **Noted** the forecast 2021/22 revenue position against the approved revenue budget shown in Appendix B, the projected major variances with reasons for these variances at Appendices C1 and C2 and the action being taken to address the underlying issues.
- b) **Noted** the latest Capital Programme 2021/22 position [and variances, if any] as shown in Appendix D.

**Options Considered:** Cabinet could have:

Not approved the monitoring information to ensure awareness of budget trends and emerging budget issues.

**Reason for Decision:** To advise the Cabinet of the latest monitoring information in respect of the 2021/22 revenue and capital budgets and emerging budget issues, for the third quarter period to 31 December 2021. The comparison in the various appendices is against the revised estimate.

### 5. **Small Land Sales**

Cabinet:

- a) **Approved** the draft Policy on small land transactions (HRA), attached at Appendix A, to be considered by the Housing Engagement Board.
- b) **Authorised** delegated authority to the Lead Member for Housing to

approve the final Policy subject to minor amendments, if any, arising from the Housing Engagement Board.

**Options Considered:** Cabinet could have:

Not adopted the Policy for small land transactions (HRA), but this is not considered to be appropriate. The Policy ensures that there is a consistent and fair approach in terms of its management of HRA assets and its decision-making.

**Reason for Decision:** To determine an appropriate framework for the consideration of requests by individuals for small land transactions for land held within the HRA.

## **6. Renewal of Home Improvement Agency Service Level Agreement**

Cabinet:

**Approved** the renewal of the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency shared service level agreement for a further three years up to 31 March 2025 (Appendix A) and the continuation of the current funding arrangements with the County Council.

**Options Considered:** Cabinet could have:

Rejected the renewal of the CHIA shared service level agreement and funding arrangements in place, but all of the benefits of the shared service would be lost if the service were to be brought back in-house. The Council does not directly subsidise the revenue cost of the service, and there is no rationale for terminating this agreement.

**Reason for Decision:** The continuation of the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency is a positive benefit to the Council. The Agency has provided support for many residents over the years to enable them to live healthy, independent and safe in their own homes through the provision of disabled adaptations and repairs. The Council benefits hugely from this service and often links in with other projects, such as making homes more energy efficient and providing Trusted Assessors to help speed up the process in terms of referrals from Occupational Health.

Without the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency, the Council would offer a lesser service that would only administer grants without providing the support and project management that the CHIA provides. This would mean that applicants, who are often vulnerable, would have to submit their own applications, appoint contractors and oversee works themselves. The one-to-one support provided by the CHIA in terms of signposting to relevant organisations, providing advice, project managing adaptations/repairs and working with health and social partners would be lost.

The CHIA is a key organisation strategically placed to help deliver on the Better Care Fund objectives.

## 7. **Interim Position Statement - First Homes**

Cabinet:

- a) **Approved** the Greater Cambridge First Homes Interim Position Statement.
- b) **Delegated** authority be given to the Lead Member for Housing to approve any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that do not materially affect the content of the Interim Position Statement.

**Options Considered:** Cabinet could have:

Not approved the Greater Cambridge First Homes Interim Position Statement

**Reason for Decision:** Without an Interim Position Statement, First Homes will revert to the national policy with no local context. There is currently ambiguity in terms of the requirement for First Homes and the Interim Position Statement sets out clearly the Council's current direction.

## 8. **Fixed Term Tenancies**

Cabinet:

**Approved** the proposal to end the use of fixed term tenancies for its own housing tenants and replaces these with lifetime tenancies for both existing and new tenants. The Council's approach to introductory tenancies will remain unchanged. Introductory tenancies are for a period of 12 months but can be extended for a further 18 months if the tenancy has not been conducted in a satisfactory manner.

**Options Considered:** Cabinet could have:

Not approve the proposal, and Council continues the use of fixed term tenancies for its own housing tenants.

**Reason for Decision:** Whereas Secure tenancies are a 'tenancy for life,' fixed term tenancies were promoted by the Government as a tool to ration council tenancies by reviewing the needs of tenants periodically. If people were assessed as not in need, the landlord could choose to end the tenancy at the end of the fixed term.

## 9. **Ermine Street Housing - Review of the Business Plan**

Cabinet:

**Approved**, in their capacity as shareholder, the Ermine Street Business Plan for the period 2021/2022 to 2030/2031.

**Options Considered:** Cabinet could have:

Not approved the Ermine Street Business Plan for the period 2021/2022 to 2030/2031.

**Reason for Decision:** The Council, as owner of the Company and sole shareholder, has an interest in reviewing the Business Plan to ensure that (i) the Company is on target to achieve its objectives, (ii) to consider the past year's performance, and (ii) acknowledge the changes in the financial assumptions and the financial return to the Council resulting from the business activity.

The original objective of the Company was to deliver 500 homes over the 5-year period 2016/2017 to 2020/2021 and the expectation is that this will now be achieved in year 2021/22.

Following a report by an independent consultant to consider the future direction of the Company, Cabinet decided in September 2020 to continue with the expansion programme until the 500-property target has been accomplished which was anticipated to be in the calendar year ending 2021 but has now slipped to March 2022. However, this date is reliant on timely completions of conveyancing for those remaining properties in the pipeline.

#### **10. Commercial Asset Disposal**

Cabinet:

**Approved** the Commercial Asset Disposal as specified in paragraph 5 of the exempt report

**Options Considered:** As specified in sub-headings under paragraph 22 of the exempt report.

**Reason for Decision:** As specified in paragraphs 6-8 of the exempt report.

#### **11. Northstowe Acquisition to Deliver Interim Community Facilities**

Cabinet:

**Approved** the property acquisition as specified in paragraph 8 of the exempt report.

This is a recommendation to Council, and not subject to call-in.

**Options Considered:** As specified in paragraphs 31-34 in the exempt report.

**Reason for Decision:** As specified in paragraph 9-11 of the exempt report.