

Decision Number: 16 (2012/13)

Portfolio Holder Executive Decision Statement

The Local Authority (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

The Decision: To agree S106 affordable housing planning gains spending proposals, as per attached sheet.

Date the decision was made: 25/09/2012

Reason for Decision

See Appendix A, as attached.

Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the Member when making the Decision:

Local Member (s), other Portfolio Holders and/or Directors/Heads of Service Consulted
Kristen Paterson, Deputy Chief Executive and Community and Planning Services Director
Pat Smith, Head of Housing and Communications
Cllr. Carol Clark, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Balanced Communities
Cllr. Jill Davison, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Improvement

Details of any conflicts of interest
a) declared by any executive member who is consulted by the Decision Taker

b) and any details of dispensations granted by the Chief Executive in respect of any declared conflict

Decision taken by:	Portfolio Holder for Housing and Balanced Communities and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Improvement
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Signed by Portfolio Holder (1)	
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Signed by Portfolio Holder (2)	
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Record made by:	
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Date of record:	27/09/12
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APPENDIX A (Decision No:)

PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION: SEVENOAKS ALMSHOUSES

Established in 1418, the Sevenoaks Almshouses is an historic organisation which was set up to provide affordable housing for older people in the Sevenoaks Town (16 x flats) and Weald (8 x bungalows). It is still providing accommodation today, though as you'd expect, the housing does need to be maintained and brought up to modern day standards.

The organisation has spent around £300k on various works to modernise the housing in recent years, but still needs to spend in the region of £530k. Rents were increased recently, bringing them more in line with other affordable housing in the area, and this will help to generate additional income to offset some of the costs. The organisation is also looking to borrow some money through a charity bank to part-fund the works, though this will need to be kept to a minimum to ensure it remains viable.

The organisation has demonstrated its continuing commitment to providing affordable housing and there is no drain on public resources in doing so. In addition, the Sevenoaks School provides on-site health care for the residents through their school surgery. The school's maintenance staff also help to undertake small repairs/adaptations etc., again resulting in savings from District Council and other public resources.

Unlike larger housing associations, the organisation does not qualify for Government's social housing grant and this limits their financial capacity. Being such a small organisation, with just 24 x units, it can only generate limited revenue. Despite these pressures, rents are kept at affordable levels and within Local Housing Allowance rates for housing benefit purposes.

Being such an important type/source of affordable housing, and for a large and significantly growing cohort in central Sevenoaks, it is in the District Council's interest to help maintain and preserve this much-needed accommodation well into the future. It would also help to protect some of the most well-known and historic (listed) buildings at the Town's well-known northern gateway.

We are therefore proposing financial contributions from affordable housing gains, as follows:

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2012/13 - £27k (refurbishment of 1 x unit)

**2013/14 - £65k towards estimated £145k rook works
£27k (refurbishment of 1 x unit)**

These works would fall within two of the previously agreed spending pots in the Core Strategy and directly contribute to key current housing strategy objectives.

Should this proposal be agreed, we would set up a local lettings plan to formalise local connection for this scheme, at affordable rates, into the future.

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