

# ***Report to the Council***

**Subject: Housing Portfolio**

**Date: 28 October 2008**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Stallan**

**Item: 8(h)**

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## **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Housing Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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## **Call for Sites – Call-in**

Following the recently issued “call for sites” from all land-owners, as a major landowner, the Council has reviewed its own land-holdings. I identified and agreed five sites on the Debden Estate, Loughton as being suitable for residential development in the future.

Following my decision being called in, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee referred the matter back to myself for further consideration.

I subsequently decided that consideration of these five sites will be deferred, and they be considered along with all identified Council-owned sites as part of a review of all potential development sites (for all development purposes) within the District.

All sites will be assessed on the basis of a single set of criteria currently being prepared by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development.

In reaching my decision, I accepted that all potential sites should be dealt with together in a co-ordinated way and assessed against a single set of criteria. I believe it would not be beneficial to the Council’s Local Development Framework preparation to have different criteria for sites in different types of ownership. I have also directed that all the reservations raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when considering the call in, should be taken into account.

## **Parking Enforcement on Housing Estates**

The Housing Scrutiny Panel considered options to resolve the increasing problems with parking and increased congestion on housing estates. In order to ease the problem the Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 1 September 2008 that the maximum amount of grassed verge to be removed in order to construct a vehicular crossover to allow residents to park their vehicle/s in their front garden be increased from 6 metres to 12 metres in length. The Cabinet agreed an additional requirement that ward members be consulted prior to approval of any crossover between 6 and 12 metres in length. Furthermore, additional budget provision has been made available to fund further off-street parking schemes.

The Housing Scrutiny Panel also considered at its last meeting, the increase in complaints from the public about unauthorised parking on grass verges causing damage to the open green spaces. When enforcement action is taken other residents complain about having nowhere to park with cars being displaced into already heavily congested side streets.

I am therefore submitting a report to Cabinet asking that consideration be given to a draft policy on the approach to be taken on unauthorised parking.

### **Fire at Jubilee Court, Waltham Abbey**

On 26 September there was a fire at the Council's sheltered housing scheme, Jubilee Court, Waltham Abbey. Fortunately no one was hurt. The fire emanated from the kitchen of one of the flats. Careline were alerted via the alarm system and they called the Fire Brigade. Council staff were on-site within 15 minutes. Only one flat was affected which is now uninhabitable and requires major repairs. The resident was moved on a temporary basis into the emergency flat at the same scheme. The Council has now moved the resident, at his own request, permanently into an alternative flat at the scheme. I would like to pass on my thanks to all housing staff who responded.

### **Allotment at Parsonage Court, Loughton**

Leisure Services have recently established an allotment at the Council's sheltered housing scheme, Parsonage Court in Loughton. This was created as part of the Active Life Initiative which is a joint venture involving Sports and Health Development, the Housing Directorate and Voluntary Action Epping Forest. An official opening took place on 21 October which was well attended. The initiative is a pilot which, if successful, will be considered at other sheltered housing schemes.

### **Housing Tree Budget**

The amount of maintenance work required to trees on Housing land throughout the District continues to increase, which has resulted in a backlog of work valued at around £26,000.

In addition, an urgent programme of tree and shrub maintenance work is needed on the Shernbroke Road side of the Ninefields Estate, Waltham Abbey which includes felling a number of trees, many of which are in danger of causing subsidence to properties, at a cost of around £38,000. I will be submitting a report to the next Cabinet to consider that a supplementary estimate of £64,000 is recommended to Full Council, funded from HRA balances, in order for this work to be undertaken as soon as possible.