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5 September 2017

To: Councillor Lynda Harford, Portfolio Holder

Kevin Cuffley  
Jose Hales

Hazel Smith

Scrutiny Monitor  
Scrutiny Monitor and Opposition  
Spokesman  
Opposition Spokesman

Dear Sir / Madam

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S MEETING**, which will be held in **MONKFIELD ROOM, FIRST FLOOR** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **WEDNESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2017 at 4.30 p.m.**

Yours faithfully  
**Beverly Agass**  
Chief Executive

**Requests for a large print agenda must be received at least 48 hours before the meeting.**

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## AGENDA

	<b>PAGES</b>
<b>1. Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>2. Minutes of Previous Meeting</b> The Portfolio Holder is asked to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2017 as a correct record.	<b>1 - 4</b>
<b>3. Tenant led Scrutiny Review of Sheltered Communal Rooms</b>	<b>5 - 16</b>

## STANDING ITEMS

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>4. Tenant Participation Group</b>   |  |
| <b>5. Date of next meeting</b><br>For the Portfolio Holder to consider future meeting dates. |  |

## **OUR LONG-TERM VISION**

South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live, work and study in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautiful, rural and green environment.

## **OUR VALUES**

We will demonstrate our corporate values in all our actions. These are:

- Working Together
- Integrity
- Dynamism
- Innovation

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR VISITORS TO SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HALL**

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# Agenda Item 2

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on  
Wednesday, 15 March 2017 at 4.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Lynda Harford

### Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors  
and Opposition spokesmen:

Anna Bradnam  
Hazel Smith  
Philippa Hart  
Bunty Waters

Also in attendance: David McCraith

### Officers:

Anita Goddard  
Stephen Hills

Housing Operational Services Manager  
Director of Housing

## 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

## 3. COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND

The Director of Housing presented the report which set out the funding allocation from DCLG under the Community Housing Fund for 2016/17. It was explained that the funding which was intended to offset the problem of second homes had been automatically allocated by government to the district.

In response to a query, members were informed that supporting local communities to bring forward affordable housing schemes in their villages was an alternative to rural exception site policy. While this required greater input by the local community it provided a greater return. Properties built through Community Land Trusts [CLT] were exempt from Right to Buy policy whereas those built on rural exception sites were not.

Reassurance was sought that trained staff would not be lost.

Members were informed that at the time of the meeting, Cambridge City Council was still to make its decision regarding use of the funding that they had also been allocated.

Members were informed that East Cambridgeshire District Council had detailed experience of bringing forward CLTs and that it had in house expertise that it was offering across the East of England.

The Housing Portfolio Holder:

- a) **NOTED** the funding allocated for community led development.
- b) **APPROVED** the proposed use of funds outlined in Option A of the report, agreeing to explore the potential for a joint community led programme with Cambridge City

Council, with Community Land Trust (CLT) East providing the Gold Kickstart Package.

#### 4. **INTERIM HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT 2017**

The Director of Housing presented the Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2017 and proposals for the new Housing Strategy 2018. He explained that the 2017 strategy was only an interim strategy to allow for government policy changes to be implemented.

Members were informed that the intention was to work with Cambridge City Council in order to develop a shared housing strategy within the next 12 months.

Councillor Bradnam congratulated officers on Appendix B of the report which clearly set out the conditions under which the council had to work with regards to the national policy context.

In response to a concern raised regarding the reference to working with the private sector on the delivery of affordable homes, the Director of Housing clarified that private sector partners were to be identified and that it was acknowledged that in order to deliver the housing that was required, the resource of private sector companies would be needed.

Regarding starter homes at Northstowe, members expressed concern that this had been committed to at Northstowe however the detail had not been established regarding how this would work. The Portfolio Holder assured members that this was being worked on and that the council was keen to include the Rent Plus model at Northstowe, whereby a 10% deposit would be gifted. This would help those struggling to save for a deposit due to the high cost of renting property in the district.

The Housing Portfolio Holder:

- a) **APPROVED** the Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2017.
- b) **AGREED** the proposals for a joint Cambridge City/South Cambridgeshire Housing Strategy from 2018.

#### 5. **AFFORDABLE HOMES SERVICE PLAN 2016/17 AND 2017/18**

The Director of Housing presented an update on the progress of the Affordable Homes Service Plan 2016/17 and presented the 2017/18 Affordable Homes Service Plan.

The tenant profiling project was discussed:

- Concern was raised that the exercise may be seen as intrusive by tenants. Assurance was provided that officers who were very familiar with tenants would be used for this project. Learning from the pilot project would be applied and another review would be undertaken following completion of the profiling of the first three villages. Processes would be adjusted if needed.
- Whilst it was acknowledged that this work may seem intrusive, with an increasing older population input was needed from tenants in order to know which services they needed to enable them to remain in their homes. The profiling project would provide this insight.
- In case they received queries from local residents, it was advised that all elected members should be made aware of the questions being asked of tenants and a summary of the benefits of the project provided to them before communication was sent out to tenants.

Communal rooms were discussed. Members felt that these were underutilised as they

were not well publicised. Members were informed that officers were seeking to undertake a pilot project in Bassingbourn to see if there was an appetite in the local community for the use of communal rooms. Officers recognised that these were a valuable resource in tackling issues of loneliness and isolation. The Local Member for Bassingbourn expressed his support for this pilot project.

The Housing Portfolio Holder:

- a) **APPROVED** the Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2017/18.
- b) **NOTED** the progress to date on existing projects within the 2016/17 Service Plan.

## 6. **TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP**

The Chairman of the Tenant Participation Group (TPG) updated members on the work that the TPG had been undertaking on the use of communal rooms. A report would be presented on this on 30 March 2017. The next TPG project would look at new lets and voids and would begin in April 2017.

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

The provisional date for the next meeting was Wednesday 21 June 2017 at 4.30pm.

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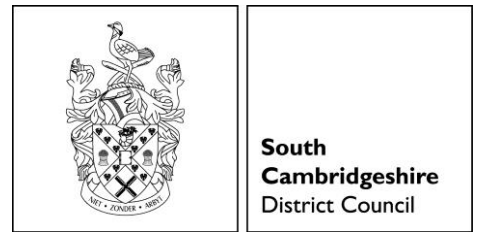
**The Meeting ended at 5.40 p.m.**

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# Agenda Item 3



**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Housing

13 September 2017

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## Tenant led Scrutiny Review of Sheltered Communal Rooms

### Purpose

1. To formally accept the Scrutiny Panel's report – 'A Review of Sheltered Housing Communal Rooms' (**Appendix A**) and approve the Action Plan (**Appendix B**) which sets out how the Council plans to take forward the recommendations and outcomes from the review.
2. This is not a key decision but has been brought before the Housing Portfolio Holder because it sets out proposed actions for the Affordable Homes Service following the Tenant led Scrutiny Review of Sheltered Housing Communal rooms.

### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder formally consider the Scrutiny Report of the Sheltered Housing Communal Rooms (**Appendix A**) and agrees to the measures set out in the Action Plan (**Appendix B**) and to suggest changes or additions where required.

### Reasons for Recommendations

4. After a recruitment drive in 2012 we supported and provided training for a group of tenants and leaseholders interested in helping us scrutinise and review services. In November 2013 we started our first major tenant led service review and since then the team have completed three scrutiny projects, the latest being the review of sheltered communal rooms.
5. We wish to thank the scrutiny team for their dedication and hard work as volunteers. The review has identified several areas for improvement and for us to work on with residents going forward. In particular many residents taking part in the scrutiny review identified service charge costs and levels of use of the communal facilities as concerns they wished to highlight.

### Background

6. In line with our corporate plan 2016-2021 objectives we want to work in partnership with our residents, parishes, businesses and community organisations within the district to develop services which will enhance the quality of life of our residents.

7. The Localism Act 2011 sets out expectations for Local Authorities and registered providers in relation to Consumer Standards. Within the legislation, the Involvement and Empowerment standard states that tenants must be given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved with the management of their homes.
8. Our Resident Involvement Strategy (2016-2018) states - we are determined to provide opportunities for residents to fully participate in the development and improvement of the housing service. We also commit to demonstrating how resident feedback has been used to improve services.

### **Considerations**

9. The Scrutiny Project Team have undertaken a detailed review into the use of the 41 Council owned sheltered housing communal rooms. This included looking into the hiring policy and booking form, the hiring fee and future use of the rooms (Appendix A).
10. An Action Plan (Appendix B) has been developed setting out how the Council will respond to the outcomes and recommendations set out within the Scrutiny Review Report.
11. The Scrutiny Review has also highlighted the need for the Council to undertake a wider review of the communal rooms in light of some of the issues raised in terms of their use and the service charge costs.
12. The Action Plan and the wider review will be taken forward through the establishment of a steering group consisting of elected members, officers and representatives from the scrutiny team to take forward the action plan and further explore possibilities for the future use of communal rooms. A report will be brought back to the Housing Portfolio Holder in spring next year outlining the recommendations following the wider review.

### **Options**

13. The Portfolio Holder is requested to formally consider the Scrutiny Report of the Review of the Sheltered Housing Communal Rooms and agree the measures set out in the Action Plan and to suggest changes or additions where required.

### **Implications**

14. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

There are no significant implications.

## Consultation responses

15. As part of the Scrutiny Review consultation took place with:-

Tenant Participation Group members.

Residents living in Sheltered accommodation via face to face meetings/coffee mornings arranged at 6 venues across the District (all sheltered tenants and leaseholders were invited to attend).

Survey questionnaires sent out to all sheltered tenants and leaseholders.

Sheltered Housing Forum attendees.

Leasehold forum attendees.

Estates Officers and other housing staff involved in the review.

## Effect on Strategic Aims

**Acceptance of this report and action plan fits in with our corporate targets of:**

### **Aim 1 – HOMES FOR OUR FUTURE**

16. Secure the delivery of a wide range of housing to meet the needs of existing and future communities.

### **Aim 2 – AN INNOVATIVE AND DYNAMIC ORGANISATION**

17. Adopt a more commercial and business-like approach to ensure we can continue to deliver the best possible services at the lowest possible cost.

## Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

**Report Author:** Peter Moston - Resident Involvement Team Leader  
Telephone: (01954) 713037

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# **Review of Sheltered Housing Communal Rooms**

**December 2016**

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**Members of Tenant Participation Group involved in this scrutiny review were:**

Wendy He ad

Angel Lewell

Patti Hall

Les Rolfe

Dave Hammond

Glynis Goff

Helen Ballantyne

Jim Watson

Joan Ball

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Scrutiny Project Team have undertaken a detailed review into the use of the Sheltered Housing Communal Rooms in 41 of the 43 Sheltered Housing Schemes. This included looking into the hiring policy and booking form, the hiring fee and future use of the rooms.

We identified a number of areas for improvement. This report details our findings and presents a number of recommendations for improvement.

We would like to thank all the South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) Sheltered staff, the group mentor and the tenants who were involved in the scrutiny process. Particular thanks to Helen Pagram and Chelsea Hilliam from the Resident Involvement Team for providing information requested.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Desktop Review of Policies and Procedures**

The purpose of this exercise was to review the policies and procedures used by SCDC when hiring out the sheltered scheme communal rooms, and compare them with those of other organisations. A list of the organisations is available at Appendix A.

### **2.2 Sheltered Housing Resident Survey**

#### **2.2.1. Sheltered Housing Forum and Leaseholders Forum**

We attended these meetings and invited members of the two forums to complete a survey to find out if they used the communal lounge at their schemes, their views regarding the hiring fee, future use of the room and other communal facilities.

Twelve members of the Sheltered Housing Forum and one member of the Leaseholder Forum completed a survey form

#### **2.2.2 Sheltered Housing Residents Coffee Mornings**

The Scrutiny Project Team produced a leaflet inviting all sheltered housing residents to attend coffee mornings at six venues across SCDC. Again we were looking to find out whether they used the communal lounge at their scheme, their views on the hiring fee, future use of the room and other communal facilities. 1500 leaflets were delivered by hand. 63 residents attended the coffee mornings and completed a survey form.

#### **2.2.3 Sheltered Housing Questionnaire sent to all Residents**

As only 63 residents attended the coffee mornings, a questionnaire was sent to all sheltered housing tenants to get a better overall view on hiring fees, use of the communal rooms and other facilities and if they used the room themselves.

### **2.3 Interviews with Estate Officers**

We interviewed 6 of the 11 Estate Officers to establish what their role was with regards to the communal rooms and how the booking system worked, how they would like to see the communal rooms used in the future and whether they would be prepared to facilitate any activities in the communal lounges.

### **2.4 Interview with Community Impact Team Leader**

We interviewed the Community Impact Team Leader, to establish what records are kept with regards to the hiring of the communal lounges, how they saw the future of the communal rooms, what they thought about the fee charged for hiring the communal lounges and their views on the use of the laundry facilities.

## **3. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **3.1 Desktop Review of Policies and Procedures**

#### **Findings:**

- The SCDC Communal Facilities Use and Charging Policy is a comprehensive document for use by staff. However, the same document is given to tenants and residents hiring the communal rooms and is felt to be too long and contains details that people may not read, and may indeed put people off hiring the room.

#### **Recommendations**

- We particularly liked the information sheet produced by Hanover Housing and would recommend that SCDC produce something along these lines in consultation with the Tenant Participation Group (TPG) and the Sheltered Housing Forum.
- Use of communal lounges by residents – no charge for residents living on the scheme who organise activities themselves such as coffee mornings, bingo.
- Use of communal lounges by community groups – a hire fee should be paid by groups who are providing a service to our residents and other local people e.g. hairdressers, chiropodists, fitness groups etc.
- Use of communal lounges by external groups – a hire fee should be paid by all external groups e.g. bridge clubs, crib clubs, Women's Institute, drama groups etc.
- Use of communal lounges by SCDC – a hire fee should be paid by SCDC when they make use of lounges for residents meetings (TPG, Leaseholder Forum, Sheltered Housing Forum, Focus Groups) and staff meetings

### **3.2 Sheltered Housing Residents Survey at Coffee Mornings**

#### **Findings**

- 65 residents said they used the communal rooms – mainly for social events and coffee mornings
- 17 residents would like to see more use made of the communal lounges
- 48 residents were in favour of the communal lounges and would not like to



- see them closed
- 47 residents said that the hiring fee should be at least £10 an hour
- 55 residents said they didn't use the computer provided in the communal room. This was because they didn't know how to use it or had their own computers and that they were a waste of time and money.
- 44 residents said that they use the other communal facilities (laundry, dryer, shower room etc.)
- 63 residents surveyed were aware that they pay a service charge for the communal facilities and said they would like a more comprehensive breakdown of their service charges.

### **3.2.1 Sheltered Housing Questionnaire (500 replies)**

#### **Findings**

- 334 (66.8%) said they use the communal rooms, 210 (42%) use the laundry and 273 (54.6%) for social activities.
- 259 (51.8%) keep the laundry payment as it is and 153(30.6%) said change to tokens.
- 210 (42%) said resident use the room enough and 193(38.6%) said they don't use it enough
- 237 (47.4%) said it wasn't used enough by outsiders.
- 228 (45.6%) said keep the fee at £5 an hour and 184 (36.8%) said raise it to £10 an hour

#### **Recommendations**

- Keep the hiring fee at £5 an hour.
- Those paying to hire a communal lounge, should pay a £25 deposit which is only returned to them if the room is left clean and tidy, and there are no breakages.
- All bookings are to be shown on the notice board at the entrance to the communal lounge, with the amount charged for each hire.
- SCDC should review the use of the computers in the communal lounges in 12 months time.

### **3.3 Interviews with Estate Officers**

#### **Findings**

- There was inconsistency in the responses from the Estate Officers with regards to their role with the communal rooms.
- All the estate officers said they promoted the rooms and took bookings for the rooms. Bookings are recorded on the calendar and a record kept on a spreadsheet at SCDC. However whilst holding the resident coffee mornings, we observed that in fact not all bookings were recorded on the calendar.
- Five of the six estate officers said they would be prepared to facilitate activities in the communal lounges if they had time

## **Recommendations**

- **All** bookings (including coffee mornings) with payment details where appropriate, must be entered onto the calendars in the entrance to the communal lounges.
- On a quarterly basis the spreadsheet of bookings and fees paid for the use of communal lounges, should be presented to the Sheltered Housing Forum for monitoring purposes.
- On a six monthly basis the Sheltered Housing Team, should provide the Sheltered Housing Forum with details on how they have been promoting the communal lounges to residents, the wider community and community groups.

### **3.4 Interview with Community Impact Team Leader**

#### **Findings**

- Records are kept of bookings that incur a fee but not those that don't incur a fee.
- The communal rooms could be used for more community based functions, e.g. doctor's and nurse's surgeries, day centres etc.
- Agreed that £5 an hour hire charge is too low. A three tier hire scheme is due to be piloted in Bassingbourn.
- The cost of the laundry facility is currently included in the service charge but could be replaced with a token slot machine.

#### **Recommendations**

- Records are kept of all bookings not just those that incur a fee.
- The hire fee is kept at £5 an hour for all hirers. It is our view that the use of a three tier payment system is not practical and open to abuse.
- The use of the laundry facilities is removed from the service charge and token slot machines be introduced to all schemes.
- SCDC should actively promote the use of the communal rooms to community based organisations.

## **4 NEXT STEPS**

- Meet with the Community Impact Team Leader on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017 to discuss her comments on the report
- Present the report to the portfolio holder for housing
- Agree an action plan to implement the agreed recommendations with the Community Impact Team Leader
- Article on the scrutiny review findings and recommendations to go in tenants newsletters
- SCDC to place a copy of the report on their website

## COMMUNAL ROOMS TENANT LED SCRUTNY REVIEW June 2016 – May 2017

## ACTION/WORK PLAN:

	<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Agreed Yes/No</b>	<b>Outcome/Implementation Notes and Timescale</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>
1.	We particularly liked the information sheet produced by Hanover Housing and would recommend that SCDC produce something along these lines in consultation with the Tenant Participation Group (TPG) and the Sheltered Housing Forum.	Yes  In Principle	We currently have a Communal Room booklet that encompasses the booking form, this will be changed to allow the booking form to be on a duplicate pad for receipt and invoice purposes. The booklet itself will be redesigned to show new charges etc. this can be done with staff and a working group of residents. We intend to work towards an electronic booking system.	Shirley Stephen (SS)
2.	Use of communal lounges by residents – no charge for residents living on the scheme who organize activities themselves such as coffee mornings & bingo.	Yes	Agreed - Coffee mornings, bingo, etc there has never been a charge for these. Where there is no charge we need to ensure they are inclusive for all residents to attend.	SS
3.	Use of communal lounges by community groups – a hire fee should be paid by groups who are providing a service to our residents and other local people e.g. hairdressers, chiropodists, fitness groups etc	Yes  In Principle	Agreed and if we were to consider a price change from the standard policy of £5 per hour we would have to consult with residents and users and this would also have to go to Council for approval.	SS
4.	Use of communal lounges by external groups – a hire fee should be paid by all external groups e.g. bridge clubs, crib clubs, womens institute, drama groups etc	Yes  In Principle	Agreed as per the current policy.	SS
5.	Use by SCDC – a hire fee should be paid by SCDC when they make use of lounges for residents meetings (TPG, Leaseholder Forum, Sheltered Housing Forum, Focus Groups) and staff meetings.	Yes  In Principle	Yes the charge of £5.00 per hour should apply to SCDC departments. We have three hubs that could be used for meetings etc. this would fall in line with the pricing to outside users.	SS
6.	Keep the current hiring fee at £5.00 per hour.	Yes	Agreed - could consider a slightly subsidized half day charge or full day charge.	SS
7.	Those paying to hire a communal lounge should pay a £25 deposit which is only returned to them if the room is left clean & tidy with no breakages.	Yes  In Principle	A cheque could be requested for £25.00 and if no breakages and the room is left clean and tidy, the cheque could then be returned. Subject to consultation locally with residents/users.	SS
8.	All bookings are to be shown on the notice board at the entrance to the communal lounge, with the amount charged for each hire.	Yes  In Principle	Agreed all Bookings to be placed on calendar in communal entrance, We are working towards an electronic booking system	SS

9.	SCDC should review the use of the computers in the communal lounges in 12 months time.	Yes	We will review this as part of the wider review over the next twelve months. We will also reconfirm that the computers were installed at no cost to the residents/service charge.	Peter Moston
10.	All bookings (including coffee mornings) with payment details where appropriate, to be entered onto the calendars in the entrance to the communal lounges.	Yes	Agreed all bookings to be recorded on a calendar in the communal entrance/notice board.	SS
11.	On a quarterly basis the spreadsheet of bookings and fees paid for the use of communal lounges should be presented to the sheltered housing forum for monitoring purposes.	Yes In Principle	We will seek to provide a report although it will be an overall amount not scheme specific.	Abigail Murray
12.	On a six monthly basis the sheltered housing team should provide the sheltered housing forum with details of how they have been promoting the communal lounges to residents, the wider community and community groups.	Yes In Principle	We will be consulting with residents as to what they would like to see being organized in the communal rooms for them. We have been in discussions with local charities to explore how they can be involved. • Long term aim	SS/Geoff Clark (GC)
13.	Records are kept of all bookings not just those that incur a fee.	Yes In Principle	This should be happening and new forms are being devised to assist officers, new forms beginning May 2017. • Currently in place	SS
14.	The hire fee remains at £5 per hour. It is our view that the use of a three tier payment system is not practical and open to abuse.	Yes In Principle	Agreed and if we were to consider a price change from the standard policy we would have to consult with residents, users and the decision would need to be considered at Council.	SS
15.	The use of laundry facilities is removed from the service charge and token slot machines be introduced to all schemes.	No	The results of the questionnaire suggests that more people want the current system to remain however we will consider this as part of the wider review in consultation with local residents. Any alternative must be easy for residents to access and not involve money.	SS
16.	SCDC should actively promote the use of the communal rooms to community based organisations.	Yes In Principle	As 12	SS/GC

## FOLLOW UP:

- We will consult with residents from beginning of April through to July - Complete.
- Mid July we will conclude a report to present to the scrutiny panel and the portfolio holder . Housing Portfolio Holder presentation/meeting due 13/09/17.
- Agree Action Plan to implement the agreed recommendations September 2017.
- Place copy of the report and action plan/follow up on our website September 2017.
- Two scrutiny team representatives to take part in any follow up/working group meetings regarding communal rooms and report back to TPG any updates.
- Report and action plan to be presented to next Sheltered Forum 19/10/17.
- Article on scrutiny review and recommendations to go in Tenant & Leaseholder News November 2017.
- Budget planning is in October – November for any changes.
- Full Council meets Spring 2018 to approve any recommendations