

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet 10 September 2009
AUTHORS: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager for Affordable Homes

PETITION RECEIVED FROM THE RESIDENTS OF AVENELLS WAY AND GRAYS ROAD, GAMLINGAY

Purpose

1. To receive and consider the contents of a petition containing 28 signatures (attached as **Appendix A** with supporting documents) received from the residents of the Sheltered Housing Scheme at Avenells Way and Grays Road, Gamlingay, raising the following issues:
 - (a) The amount of Sheltered Housing Officers' time allocated to the scheme.
 - (b) The Supporting People Charge for this service.
 - (c) The implications on the service following the outcome of the Housing Futures ballot.

The covering letter refers to the recent reduction to a part-time warden service, charges for the service and previous correspondence with the Council on the subject whilst the wording of the petition itself is as follows:

'As this is a Warden-controlled scheme, we expect a Warden here at least (between) 9am to 5pm, which we were promised and are paying for.'

2. This is not a key decision; however, it was published in the Forward Plan for August 2009.

Background and procedure

3. The petition was dated 21 June 2009 and received by the Council on 7 July 2009. In accordance with the Procedural Guidance relating to petitions, set out in Part 5 of the Constitution, an acknowledgement was sent to the lead petitioner immediately. The lead petitioner was subsequently advised that the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee had directed that the petition should be referred to the next meeting on the Cabinet for consideration. The lead petitioner, Mr. Doug Gilbert, was notified accordingly.
4. The Council's approved scheme allows the lead petitioner to speak at the meeting at which the petition is presented for up to five minutes, following which Members may ask questions for clarification during a further five-minute period. The petitioner is not entitled to take part in any debate on the matter, but will be given the opportunity to give a two-minute summation speech when directed by the Leader.
5. Mr. Gilbert has been advised of the public speaking provisions set out above and has indicated that he wishes to exercise this right at the meeting.

Options and supporting information

6. Cabinet is invited to receive and to determine a response to the petition. In accordance with paragraph 13 of the protocol referred to above, the petition may be referred to any other body of the Council for action; this might include, for example the full Council, Scrutiny and Overview Committee, individual Cabinet Portfolio Holder or an officer of the Council. It is recommended that the petition should be referred to the next meeting of the Housing Portfolio Holder for detailed consideration.
7. In determining a response to the petition, Cabinet may wish to take into account the following representations by the Corporate Manager for Affordable Homes, which have been communicated separately in a letter to the Lead Petitioner:

(a) *Allocation of Sheltered Housing Officers to the Scheme*

The Sheltered Housing Officer time allocated to the scheme is half a day as the officer covers another adjacent scheme in Blythe Way. The scheme at Blythe Way is equally provided with half a day, Monday to Friday. The ratio of residents to officer time, as far as can practically be managed, is equitable throughout the district.

(b) *The Supporting People Charge for the service*

The Supporting People charge is a charge that pays for the support service received from the Sheltered Housing Service. The charge is the same for all council residents living in sheltered housing, irrespective of the need for that support or the officer time allocated to a scheme. The Council considers that this is not the best use of a support service, therefore it will be reviewing how a support service for older people may be best delivered to those that need it.

The service requires review for the reason given above and also because of the economic pressures being experienced by the County Council's Supporting People budget. The Council will be meeting with the Supporting People Manager to discuss how best to achieve a service that both reflects residents' support needs and the charges for that service.

(c) *The implications on the service following the outcome of the Housing Futures ballot.*

The Council is presently reviewing its budgets, as a result of which there will be changes to the service that will most likely entail cuts in real terms. The Housing Service will not be filling currently unfilled posts, and will be reducing the overall number of Sheltered Housing Officers. This is in line with clear statements made in the Council's Formal Consultation document on the option of staying with the Council.

As an outcome of its reviews, the Council will be seeking to establish a more equitable service that meets the needs of older residents, is flexible to changing needs, easily accessible and offers choice.

Implications

8. Financial	There are no resources available within the Council's Supporting People allocation to extend the existing Warden Service.
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Legal	The terms of the Council's current contract require each Sheltered Housing resident to contribute to the support charge irrespective of need.
Staffing	Previously, recruitment to unfilled posts was put on hold pending the outcome of the Housing Futures project. As identified in paragraph 7(c) above, the recruitment freeze continues until the outcomes of the wider service review are known.
Risk Management	Failure to achieve significant savings and efficiencies within the housing service has been identified on the Council's Strategic Risk Register as a risk to be mitigated through the agreement and implementation of an action plan with the Housing Portfolio Holder.
Equal Opportunities	The Council's current Sheltered Housing Warden service provides equal access to all residents regardless of their individual circumstances and level of need.

Effect on the Council's Strategic Aims

9.	Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.
	The Council is committed to providing a high-quality, flexible service which meets the needs of users, not only within Sheltered Housing Schemes but also for all the Council's tenants, and all residents.
	Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all.
	Each resident continues to have access to a 24-hour emergency alarm, therefore the absence of a permanent on-site warden is not considered to compromise their health and safety.
	Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.
	None specific.
	Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all.
	None specific
	Commitment to providing a voice for rural life.
	None specific.

Recommendation

10. That Cabinet receive the petition and refer it to the meeting of the Housing Portfolio Holder on 16 September 2009 for detailed consideration and agreement of a response.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Procedural Guidance – Petitions (from Part 5, Section K of the Constitution)

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