

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet 10 November 2005  
**AUTHOR:** Housing and Environmental Services Director

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### **SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **Purpose**

1. To provide an executive summary of the report to Portfolio Holder and Housing for Older People Advisory Group and to recommend endorsement of the recommendations in that report.

#### **Background**

##### **2. Why is the review being carried out?**

The Council is reviewing its sheltered housing service following a county wide best value review of sheltered housing conducted by the County Council's Supporting People team. That review suggested that South Cambs was 'overprovided' with sheltered housing compared to other districts, and that staffing levels in South Cambs were high when compared to other local authority and housing association providers.

3. It is likely that the County Council's Supporting People budget will reduce by up to 33% over the next five years.
4. There are significant pressures on the Council's general fund and the Council's housing revenue account needs to reduce expenditure by up to £437k from 2006/07 to remain viable into the future.

#### **What are the facts and figures?**

5. The Council provides 1378 sheltered housing units in 45 schemes, which range from 20 to 62 units. The service employs 43 scheme managers and 21 mobile managers who provide daily visits to most residents and respond to out of hour's emergencies.
6. The service costs £2.5m pa, of which £1.7m is staff costs.
7. Income of £1.3m is collected through the payment of service charges and Supporting People funding.
8. The Housing Revenue Account subsidises the service to the tune of £900k, with a General Fund contribution of £300k.
9. The difference between the actual cost of providing the service and the charges paid by tenants varies from £4.17pw to £25.30pw. Other Council tenants, many of whom are aged over 60 years, are effectively paying £4pw to subsidise the sheltered housing service.

10. While a higher proportion of sheltered housing residents suffer long term limiting illnesses or are wheelchair users there are greater numbers of people with these needs living within the Council's general needs housing stock.

#### **How has the review been carried out?**

11. The Housing for Older People Advisory Group (HOPAG) met three times earlier this year to consider the issues in more detail. Members also visited other sheltered housing providers. The HOPAG report was presented to the Housing Portfolio Holder on 28 October 2005 and is attached in a revised form as **Appendix A**.

#### **What changes are being proposed?**

12. **A new role for scheme managers** – to increase their responsibilities for the assessment and introduction of residents; closer working with neighbourhood managers and health and social care staff; to work 9 to 5 on site; no longer required to live on site.
13. **A local team based approach** – with managers organised into small teams, each manager providing support to a group of residents and having responsibility for communal facilities; within those teams, managers providing cover to nearby schemes when the regular manager is absent; and some providing support to residents in two schemes in order to balance resident numbers.
14. **A new out of hours response service** – with all calls for out of hours on-site assistance being directed to a team of health and social care staff
15. **Better use of communal facilities** – to ensure that all schemes enjoy a full activity programme; that residents are supported to organise activities, and that social and health care services are brought into communal facilities. To encourage older people from local communities to use the facilities.

#### **A proposed working model**

16. Initial work suggests that support can be provided to sheltered scheme residents by a team of about 40 staff based on a 'manager to resident' ratio of 1:34. It is proposed that staff be organised in three area teams, coterminous with other housing service areas and the PCT's localities, which will in turn be subdivided into local groups.
17. In schemes of 34 units this means that the manager will normally support all residents on that site and take responsibility for maintaining and promoting the communal facilities there. When she is not available a colleague manager from the same group will provide cover, usually this will be the same colleague manager in order to minimise the number of managers providing support at any one scheme.
18. In schemes with, for example, less than 34 units managers will offer some of their time to other schemes in the local group with higher resident numbers in order to balance staff support time. As a consequence, in schemes of more than 34 units, support to residents may be provided by more than one manager.
19. The operational arrangements and detailed planning will clarify precisely how these arrangements will work, but the three important principles that apply are:
  - (a) A resident will have a 'lead' manager with whom a long term trusting relationship can be built and when that manager is unavailable support will normally be

provided by a named colleague, minimising the number of managers which a resident will see.

- (b) Communal facilities will be managed by a 'lead' manager who will have responsibility for that facility's operation, though may be supported by colleagues in organising events etc.
- (c) Managers will be expected to provide support to residents in other schemes in their local group, either on an ongoing basis in order to balance manager to resident ratios, or occasionally to cover absence.

20. In respect of homes currently occupied by scheme managers, a detailed assessment will be undertaken of each scheme and its scheme manager housing in order to determine its suitability for other residential uses. There may be instances where the personal circumstances of the appointed manager and the type of property available in the sheltered scheme mean that living on site would be the optimal solution and in this instance the manager could live on site or in the locality.

### **Out of hours arrangements**

21. One of the primary factors behind the high cost of the sheltered service is its 24/7 staffing coverage.
22. Analysis of out of hour's calls illustrates that there are relatively few (212 for the five months from January to May 2005); that a low level of these calls require a personal response (100 over the same period); and that the majority of these (72) require either a 'blue light' emergency call, or less urgent physical assistance.
23. The proposal is that all 'out of office hours' alarm calls (initially routed to Invicta Telecare in Kent) that require a non 'blue light' urgent response are dealt with by the PCT's 'START' team which comprises health and social care staff. This team is able to lift fallen residents and to administer medication, unlike the Council's scheme managers. The START team already provide out of hours responses for the City Council's sheltered housing service.

### **What do residents think?**

24. Three phases of consultation have been organised:
- (a) In June residents were sent a postal questionnaire, 904 (66%) responded. They were asked what they regarded as the most important features of sheltered housing. 27% said the 24 hour alarm; 26% said daily contact with the scheme manager; and 23% said the security of living on a sheltered scheme.
  - (b) 327 housing applicants responded to a similar postal survey again the 24 hour alarm service emerged as sheltered housing's most important feature.
  - (c) In August ten meetings were held at sheltered schemes to discuss the proposals for change. These were attended by 159 residents who were broadly receptive to the suggestions for a more flexible service as long as it preserved continuity of contact with one manager. There was some concern, particularly at one meeting, about the proposal not to require managers to live on site.

25. In September all residents were sent a letter explaining the proposals in more detail and inviting comments. 40 individuals responded, one group of residents held a meeting and sent in minutes, and three petitions were received. Generally residents recognised the need to change and a number were supportive of the proposals. The main concerns were that they would lose their existing scheme manager, that they would see a variety of new faces, and that scheme managers would not be required to live on site.

#### **What do staff think?**

26. Staff have been briefed face to face and by newsletters through the review process. There has also been a more formal consultation process in September. In addition a staff forum has been meeting to discuss the proposals in more detail and the Director has been meeting with Unison representatives.
27. In broad terms the need for change has been recognised, and the proposals have been welcomed and are regarded as workable.
28. Understandably, concerns have focussed on specific matters such as the composition of local teams, the future of residential staff accommodation, and the process by which staff numbers will be reduced.

#### **What are the financial effects?**

29. The estimated effect of the changes is a net saving of £458,000pa (not including redundancy and pension costs).
30. However this saving will not necessarily all be realisable from April 2006 and the level of savings will depend upon the detail of the implementation plan.
31. It has not been possible to quantify redundancy costs at this stage as the outcome of the staff selection process will not be known until early in 2006. However initial estimates suggest that one off redundancy costs could range from £34,000 to £694,000 with ongoing compensatory added year pension costs of up to £20,000. These costs will be borne by the Housing Revenue Account.

#### **Recommendations**

32. It is recommended that,
- (a) Cabinet endorses the vision for the Sheltered Housing Service as set out in Paragraph 19 of the attached report at Appendix A and the key principles set out at Paragraph 20 of the Portfolio Holder's report and agree the outline staffing structure set out at Appendix 3, subject to further consultation with staff on the final composition of the teams.
  - (b) work continues with staff, stakeholders and residents on the long-term vision for housing for older people, to be incorporated in a South Cambridgeshire Strategy for Older People.
  - (c) the Difficult to Let flats detailed at Paragraph 15 of the Portfolio Holder's report be re-designated as non-sheltered properties for letting to single people in the 40 to 60 age group.

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