
REPORT TO:	COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	12 JULY 2001	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	SANDRA WHILES	DOC:
SUBJECT:	BEST VALUE REVIEW – SHELTERED HOUSING AND THE WARDEN SERVICES	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That members :

- Note the findings of the Best Value Inspectors report.
- Agree the proposed minimum standards and service standards for the revised service.
- Agree that further work on revising the allocation policy for Sheltered Housing and the standards of accommodation is done as part of the Best Value review of Housing Services due to start in September 2001.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To advise members of the outcome of the Housing Best Value Inspectors Final Report of the Sheltered Housing and Wardens Services and the key actions currently being taken to address some of the major weaknesses.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The final Best value report was published on 14 June 2001. See Annexe A.
- 3.2 Since the Inspectors delivered their Interim Challenge in February an action plan has been prepared to improve the service. The Inspectors have taken this into account and now changed their scoring of the service from "Poor Service; Will not improve" to "Poor Service; Unlikely to improve".

3.3 The Inspectors have made the following recommendations

- Make sure that all sheltered housing schemes provide a safe, secure and supportive living environment for all tenants.
- Revise the allocations policy for sheltered housing in order to ensure that sheltered housing schemes for older people do not house mixed client groups whose differing lifestyles are likely to cause distress and anxiety to existing older tenants.
- Agree the sheltered housing and warden services that will be provided in each scheme and make sure that the charges paid by tenants reflect the service received and that all tenants can use services if wish to.
- Find out what older people need from Sheltered Housing and Wardens Services and in partnership with Health, Social Services and the Voluntary Sector, see how the service can be changed to meet these needs.
- Work with tenants, Health Service providers, Social Care providers and the voluntary sector to agree the services that will be provided by each sector.
- Make sure that other Health and Social Care providers are part of the plans to make any changes to the services, making sure those older tenants receive the support they need. The new arrangements should minimise confusion, and maximise tenants ability to remain independent and receive care and support in their homes.

3.4 A report outlining proposed service improvements was approved at the Housing and Environment Committee of 5th April 2001.

3.5 The following action has been taken:

- Focus groups have been held with sheltered housing tenants, Housing Staff and Key Stakeholders. The key points from the focus groups are detailed in Annexe B.
- The fire and emergency procedures have been revised and a new procedure is currently being prepared.
- The removal of rubbish and other items giving rise to a hazard has been organised.
- The Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies are working with us to prepare our own wardens procedure manual.
- The minimum acceptable standards of accommodation have been identified. Improvements to some of the Sheltered Housing Schemes will form part of this year's Housing Investment Programme submission. It is proposed that further work on the standards of accommodation be investigated as part of the Housing Services Best Value Review due to commence in September 2001.

- Allegations of complaints linked to inappropriate allocation of young tenants (under 60's) have been investigated. These were not substantiated. In fact, from the register of complaints there were more complaints from the over 60's. However, investigations did highlight that the proper methods of registering complaints were not always being used which made it difficult to challenge the complaints. Training has now been given to the Sheltered Housing Staff on the allocation policy and the complaint procedure. The Best Value Report highlighted concerns regarding mixed client groups whose differing lifestyles are likely to cause distress and anxiety to existing older tenants. The Council primarily only makes mixed allocations to let long term voids in order to meet housing needs. It is recognised that mixed allocations are not an ideal solution and may cause distress to some tenants. It is proposed that the allocation policy and the designation of schemes be reviewed as part of the Housing Services Best Value Review due to commence in September 2001.
- A meeting has been held with our partners in care (Social Services, the NHS and Voluntary Sector) to identify cross-working arrangements and to establish closer links.
- The Service parameter and structure is currently being reviewed with an aim of making step changes to improve the service and to bring the cost of the service in balance with the income in advance of Supporting People in 2003. The proposed minimum standards and service standards for the revised service are set out in Annexe C.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 There has been a good response from staff to work with management to improve the service. The work so far as highlighted the need for Sheltered Housing to be better integrated into the wider work of the Housing Division, particularly the Advice and Liaison service.

6.0 Background Papers

6.1 Committee Report of 5 April 2001 to Housing and Environment Committee – "Sheltered Housing Service"

