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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b> 17
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>29 AUGUST 2002</b>	<b>CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>SANDRA WHILES, HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>DAWN DAWSON (ext 5797)</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>IMPROVEMENTS TO SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE : CONSULTATION WITH TENANTS AND OPTION APPRAISAL SHELTERED OF SCHEMES AT BASSES CRESCENT, PINE GROVE AND SMALLTHORNE</b>	<b>REF:</b> s:\cent_serv\committee reports\community services\29 aug 2002\sh-optionappraisal.doc
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>CASTLE GRESLEY, WOODVILLE, NEWHALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: CS01</b>

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## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 Members approve the proposals to consult and work with tenants of Bass's Crescent, Castle Gresley, Pine Grove Newhall and Smallthorne Place Woodville to look at alternative and better housing options as these schemes before formally considering the future use of the schemes at a subsequent committee.
- 1.2 Members approve the temporary suspension of lettings at all three schemes until it receives a further report including results of consultation meetings.
- 1.3 Members approve the proposals to consult with stakeholders on potential options for these schemes before it formally considers the future use of the schemes at a subsequent committee

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To consider ways to bring about improved services to tenants by considering the issues of increasing void levels in three sheltered schemes owned by the Council, information on the condition of these schemes, information on demand and housing need and to explore the opportunities for dealing with these schemes in a way that leads to improved services for tenants.

## **3.0 Content**

- 3.1 Members agreed in January 2002 to carry out option appraisals on the future of the Sheltered Housing schemes at Bass's Crescent, Castle Gresley, Pine Grove Newhall and Smallthorne Place Woodville in order that the Council can identify a clear way forward for each of these schemes.

- 3.2 Members will recall that the Best Value Inspectors have highlighted the need for the Council to develop its vision for Sheltered Housing and to make clear decisions on the standards and quantity of sheltered accommodation it provides. These decisions need to take into account the likely future demand for sheltered accommodation and the standards of accommodation that the Council accepts as acceptable for its tenants
- 3.3 The three sheltered schemes in question suffer from chronic low demand that can be linked to lack of demand for sheltered housing in the locality. They comprise bedsits and smaller properties, have poor communal facilities and a general lack of facilities for older people. Two of the schemes have communal facilities and were originally designed with older people in mind, whilst one scheme has no communal facilities nor is it specifically suitable for older people.
- 3.4 The Government's assessment of Sheltered Housing provision in the District is a requirement for between 10 and 229 homes, whilst the Council has over 1,100 homes. The introduction of the Supporting People programme and increasing expectations from customers may mean that future demand for these schemes will decline further. tenants of Bass's Crescent, Castle Gresley, Pine Grove Newhall and Smallthorne Place Woodville to look at alternative and better housing options as these schemes in their present condition are not of an acceptable standard for use for older people or for other tenants with support needs.
- 3.5 The initial option appraisal concludes that all three sheltered schemes suffer from low demand from prospective residents, with the exception of the bungalows at Pine Grove. Although they are all in basically sound physical condition they are in need of modernising and some require significant improvements, particularly to communal areas, to meet prospective tenants aspirations for the future.
- 3.6 The initial option appraisal report recommends that the Council now works with tenants of Bass's Crescent, Castle Gresley, Pine Grove Newhall and Smallthorne Place Woodville to look at alternative and better housing options for them as these schemes in their present condition are not of an acceptable standard for use for older people or for other tenants with support needs.
- 3.7 After considering the outcome of the proposed consultation exercise if the Council were to change the use of these schemes it could either retain the schemes and make improvements - perhaps with a partner, it could demolish and redevelop the schemes - again perhaps with a partner, or it could dispose of the property. The options for any future use will be part of the next stage of the appraisal process.

### **Consultation Proposals**

- 3.8 There will be extensive consultation with the tenants concerned before members make a final decision. The Sheltered Housing and Advice Liaison Manager will lead on consultation with residents, their relatives or carers, staff and other stakeholders as appropriate. If Committee approve this consultation it is proposed that this will commence in September and be completed by the end of October, with a report made to Committee in November on the results. Consultation will take the form of a meeting at each scheme to which other stakeholders including Ward Members will be invited, questionnaire and feedback form for each resident and member of staff, and letter explaining the issues to all tenants.
- 3.9 Tenants will be briefed about the lack of demand for the schemes, and the potential costs associated with bringing these up to modern day standards, the

6 implications of the anticipated Supporting People review for all the Council's sheltered housing, will be asked for their views on the schemes and services provided and will be asked for feedback on a range of options, including supported moves to more suitable Council sheltered accommodation

3.10 The Head of Community Services will lead on consultation with stakeholders, including Registered Social Landlords, Social Services and Health. If Members approve this consultation it is proposed it will commence in September and be completed by the end of October with a report being made to Committee in November. Stakeholders will be invited to submit their proposals for the redevelopment or improvement of the schemes for members to consider alongside the results of the tenant consultation exercise

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 There are significant financial implications if schemes are retained without addressing the lack of demand; costs include - community charge on vacant properties, loss of rent and service charge, and increasing void costs to improve properties to lettable standard to meet tenants aspirations. Significant capital investment would be needed to bring the schemes up to a suitable standard and there is no evidence of demand for this quantity of Sheltered Housing even if this were the approach taken.

4.2 There are significant staff costs associated with dealing with vacant properties and trying to relet unpopular flats or bedsits. Saving costs on the maintenance and improvement of unpopular hard-to-let schemes will mean that the Council can maximise the investment that can be made in other more popular schemes and hence improve the quality of overall service provision for tenants in sheltered housing, although obviously this will incur loss of some rental income.

#### **5.0 Corporate Implications**

5.1 The Council seeks to make the best use of its assets and has targets to let properties within 4 weeks of them becoming empty. If this cannot be achieved this has financial implications on the Housing Revenue Account. The schemes in question have significant numbers of properties that have been empty for many months

#### **6.0 Community Implications**

6.1 There are many community issues which are important. Tenants and Members are concerned by the vacant properties and this does not make the best use of the assets that the Council has. The Committee has approved a pilot incentive package for tenants to assist tenants who are under-occupying properties who would move to smaller sheltered accommodation, and this will help to maintain the more popular sheltered schemes which remain a focus for the community.

#### **7.0 Conclusions**

7.1 Consultation with tenants and stakeholders will help members decide what action to take to deal with these three unpopular schemes and will assist the Council in maintaining its popular schemes and to improve them to meet tenants aspirations in the future.

#### **8.0 Background Papers**

8.1 Report to Community Services Committee 10 January 2002 – Remodelling of Sheltered Schemes