
REPORT TO:	Housing and Community Services	AGENDA ITEM:
DATE OF MEETING:	20th November 2003	CATEGORY: Delegated
REPORT FROM:	Director of Community Services	EXEMPT Paragraph 9
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Bob Ledger (ext. 5775)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Sheltered Housing – Strategic Vision	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS01

1. Reason for Exempt

- 1.1 The Report discusses the possible de-classification of a number of Sheltered Housing Schemes and thereby a change in services to be provided.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members approve the draft Vision Statement, Aims and Service Standards for Sheltered Housing produced by officers, as shown at Appendix 1 and the draft strategic direction document, produced by the 'Task and Finish Group', as shown at Appendix 2. Combined these documents comprise the overall 'vision' for the future of the sheltered housing service and it is proposed that Members approve a consultation process on this combined document that includes all users of the sheltered housing service. It is proposed that the results of the consultation be reported back to the Committee before the end of the financial year.
- 2.2 Members note, subject to a detailed quotation, the upgrade of alarm call hardware will cost in the region of £350,000. The funding of this will need to be the subject of a future resource bid to the single capital pot.
- 2.3 Members note that upgrading the existing sheltered housing stock in line with the standards as detailed in appendix 2 will cost in the order of £1m to achieve. More work will be done by officers on detailing the costs involved and a further report will be brought before the Committee.
- 2.4 Members approve the cessation of the service providing white goods to sheltered housing tenants following a period of consultation. Existing

white goods would be 'gifted' to existing tenants subject to an appropriate safety check.

- 2.5 Members approve that individual consultation be undertaken with all affected residents and that the following Sheltered Accommodation be declassified to General Purpose housing at the following locations;

Scheme	No of properties involved
• Belvoir Crescent, Newhall	30
• Pine Grove (flats), Newhall	16
• Honeysuckle, Meadow Lane, Newhall.	16
• Four Lane Ends, Newhall	12
• Bloomfield Close, Hilton	20
• Foston Close / Field Avenue, Hatton	10

- 2.6 Members approve that where blocks of flats are declassified and become general purpose stock an amended allocations policy on those flats be adopted as detailed in 6.4 of the report.
- 2.7 Members approve individual consultation with existing affected tenants aimed at bringing the hundred and sixteen bungalows sited in Newhall and Hartshorne into the sheltered housing stock.
- 2.8 That Members approve that detailed feasibility and consultation work be undertaken on the possible installation of platform or passenger lifts to the sheltered first floor flats in Newlands Close, Church Gresley.

3. Purpose of Report

- 3.1 To deliver a draft vision for the future of the sheltered housing service that incorporates the physical layout and standard of the properties and their environment as well as the standard of service that will be delivered by officers whether they be Community Wardens or Careline operatives.
- 3.2 This draft vision draws heavily upon the work carried out by the Task and Finish group established in November 2002 and the outcome of the Housing Needs and Market Demand Survey completed in July 2003.

4. Aims, goals and Strategic Direction

- 4.1 Following the Best Value Inspection of the Sheltered Housing Service in June 2001, and the Re-Inspection in December 2002, Members have directed and supported improvements to the service. A Task and Finish group, comprising representatives of the District Council, Social Services, PCT, Tenants and the Voluntary Sector was established in November 2002, and was charged with drafting a Vision for the service and determining standards for the accommodation provided by the service.

4.2 The Task and Finish Group met twice and visited a range of specialist housing provision for older people. The group worked towards agreeing a proposed strategic vision for sheltered housing including setting 'desirable' and 'essential' standards for the physical environment of sheltered accommodation. This work has been refined by officers, informed by the results of the report on housing need and market demand. It is proposed that the Task and Finish Group be reconvened as an early part of the proposed consultation process in order to 'verify' these amendments although they are small in number. The draft strategic direction is shown at Appendix 2.

5. Proposals for the de-classification of selected Sheltered Housing stock

- 5.1 The Task and Finish Group drafted two sets of design standards for accommodation for older people. One intended to be used to influence the upgrade of the physical layout of existing stock and the second to influence the design and development of any new specialist social housing for older people. Both sets of standards are contained within the draft strategic direction document (the proposed standards for existing stock have been amended by officers to recognise what is practically possible to achieve with existing property). Even with these amendments the cost of full implementation of the standards in our existing stock are likely to be over £1m. More detailed work is being carried out on these costs the outcome of which will be reported to Committee asap.
- 5.2 Specialist research into the Housing Needs and Market Demand for older people accommodation was commissioned earlier in the year with the results being delivered at the end of July 2003. This work along with the work on standards of accommodation was aimed at allowing the Council to consider where;
- existing sheltered housing provision is not suitable for older people
 - where over provision of sheltered housing exists
 - insufficient accommodation is currently provided
 - current accommodation needs re-configuring.
- 5.3 As identified in the research the market place in relation to housing for older people is changing. The survey concluded that in some areas there was sufficient choice and competition between units of accommodation for the elderly but that in some areas property types were effectively "past their sell by date". The survey recommended "radical approaches" to prevent these properties declining and becoming difficult to let.
- 5.4 The body of the work in terms of reviewing the individual future of all 53 sheltered schemes and measuring them against changing demand and the physical layout standards still needs to be undertaken. This should be done in a thorough and considered way taking account of changes in the related provision of Social Services and the PCT. For these reasons, this report focuses on seven schemes believed to be the most critical for

attention where there are significant low demand and access issues that need addressing in the short term.

- 5.5 There is significant demand for general purpose accommodation in the areas where the declassification of sheltered housing is proposed below. The current waiting list identifies 116 applicants under 60 years of age interested in a flat in Newhall and 57 similar applicants seeking similar accommodation in Hatton/Hilton.
- 5.6 Attached at Appendix 3 is an illustrated summary of the detail below as they relate to each identified scheme.

□ **Belvoir Crescent, Newhall**

- This scheme was built in a configuration of three blocks of six flats, two blocks of four flats and two blocks of two flats. All flats have one bedroom, and the scheme is currently the most difficult to let, particularly to the first floor. In the year to 7th October 2003, the revenue loss associated with the number of void dwellings on the scheme was in the order of £14,000
- There are no communal facilities within the scheme, or any other features that would readily identify this as suitable sheltered accommodation.
- There are no lifts within any of the blocks and due to their layout, the installation of passenger lifts is not an option. It may be possible to install platform lifts at a cost of up to £15,000 per block, dependent on the configuration of the stairs.

Recommendation

Due to these factors, and in consideration of the fact that there are a number of other sheltered dwellings in Newhall, it is proposed that this scheme is de-classified and released into General Purpose stock.

□ **Pine Grove, Newhall (flats only)**

- The flats are all one bedroom and were built in a configuration of four blocks of four dwellings. Whilst the ground floor flats are popular, the first floor flats remain difficult to let, despite the Committee decision of a year ago to reduce the age criteria for letting to 55 years of age. In the year to 7th October 2003, the revenue loss associated with the number of void flats was in the order of £12,000.
- There are no communal facilities within the scheme, or any other features that would readily identify this as suitable sheltered accommodation.
- There are no lifts within any of the blocks. There may be a possibility of installing an external passenger lift, linked to the flats via an atrium style walkway. This cost would conservatively be in the region of £100,000. Again, it may be possible to install platform lifts at a cost of up to £15,000 per block, dependent on the configuration of the stairs.

Recommendation

Due to these factors and the fact that there are a number of other sheltered dwellings in Newhall, it is proposed that the flats are de-classified and released into General Purpose stock.

□ **Honeysuckle, Meadow Lane, Newhall**

- This scheme consists of four blocks of four, one bedroom flats. The scheme, in particular the first floor dwellings, is becoming increasingly difficult to let. In the year to 7th October 2003, the revenue loss associated with the number of void dwellings on the scheme was in the order of £7,500.
- There are no communal facilities within the scheme, or any other features that would identify this as suitable sheltered accommodation.
- There are no lifts within any of the blocks and due to their layout, the installation of passenger lifts is not an option. It may be possible to install platform lifts at a cost of up to £15,000 per block, dependent on the configuration of the stairs.

Recommendation

Due to these factors, and in consideration of the fact that there are a number of other sheltered dwellings in Newhall, it is proposed that this scheme is de-classified and released into General Purpose stock.

□ **Four Lane Ends, Newhall**

- This scheme has been built to an unusual design of one block of twelve dwellings, four of which have separate entrances. All properties have one bedroom. Unlike the other schemes being recommended for de-classification, this scheme is not particularly difficult to let. However, contained within the design are a number of stairs and stepped entrances, which make the scheme particularly unsuitable for older people.
- There are no communal facilities within the scheme, or any other features that would identify this as suitable sheltered accommodation.
- There are no lifts within any of the blocks and due to their layout, the installation of passenger lifts is not an option. Platform lifts are unlikely to help, in that there is more than one flight of stairs to negotiate to access the first floor.

Recommendation

Due to these factors, and in consideration of the fact that there are a number of other sheltered dwellings in Newhall, it is proposed that this scheme is de-classified and released into General Purpose stock.

□ **Bloomfield Close, Hilton**

- This scheme has been built in a configuration of five blocks of four, one bedroom flats. This scheme, in particular the first floor dwellings, is becoming increasingly difficult to let, attracting a revenue loss in the order of £3,000 in the year to 7th October 2003.

- There are no communal facilities within the scheme, or any other features that would identify this as suitable sheltered accommodation.
- The entrances into the blocks are generally stepped.
- There are no lifts within any of the blocks and due to their layout, the installation of passenger lifts is not an option. Platform lifts are unlikely to help, in that there is more than one flight of stairs to negotiate to access the first floor.

Recommendation

Due to these factors, and in consideration of the fact that there is more suitable sheltered accommodation in Percy Wood Close, it is proposed that this scheme is de-classified and released into General Purpose stock.

□ **Foston Close / Field Avenue, Hatton**

- This recommendation relates only to the ten dwellings provided by 'one up, one down' flats. All flats have one bedroom, their own separate entrances and shared garden space. The first floor flats are difficult to let, with a revenue loss in the order of £2,000 in the year to 7th October 2003.
- Two of the first floor flats have external stairs and a short internal flight to access the living area.

Recommendation

Seven of the flats are in Field Avenue away from the 'centre' of the older person's community in Foston Close and it is proposed those be declassified to General Purpose stock. Although the three remaining flats are integral to the older person's community, the first floor flats are only accessible by negotiating two separate flight of stairs and it is therefore proposed to de-classify these as well.

□ **Newlands Close, Church Gresley (flats only)**

- This recommendation relates only to the flats within this scheme. The flats are configured in five blocks of four dwellings, and all have one bedroom. These dwellings, particularly those on the first floor are becoming increasingly difficult to let, with a revenue loss of approximately £4,600 in the year to 7th October 2003.
- Due to the layout of this scheme, the flats cannot easily be separated from the surrounding bungalows and form an integral part of the Sheltered Scheme.

Recommendation

It is therefore proposed to investigate in detail, the feasibility around the installation of either platform lifts, if possible, at a cost of up to £15,000 per block, or an external passenger lift giving access to the first floors via balconies, at an estimated cost in excess of £120,000.

- 5.7 The research into the sheltered housing stock has discovered that some one hundred and sixteen bungalows in the Newhall and Hartshorne areas are not classified as sheltered, have no warden call system and are not connected to the Careline service. These bungalows provide accommodation better suited to the elderly, with the bungalows at The

Crescent, John Street and St Johns Avenue lending themselves to a scheme which would benefit from the provision of a communal lounge. It should be noted that some bungalows have been classified as defective dwellings and therefore further investigation into their suitability and investment requirements regarding their long-term viability, irrespective of their stock classification, would need to be carried out.

6. Effect of De-Classification on Existing Tenants

- 6.1 Members will recall that the process of de-commissioning Bass's Crescent, Castle Gresley and Smallthorn Place, Woodville, was lengthy, with Housing Staff heavily involved in sensitively supporting tenants through the process.
- 6.2 Experience gained from this process indicates that the de-classification of schemes is likely to be met with some resistance from existing tenants, and may be distressing to some.
- 6.3 It is therefore proposed that, for those schemes to be de-classified, tenants may choose to remain in what will become general stock but will still have access to the Careline alarm system and the Community Warden Service. Alternatively tenants may choose to relocate to sheltered accommodation.
- 6.4 In recognition of the fact that a number of tenants will choose to stay in their current homes, despite declassification, it is proposed that an amended lettings policy be adopted for these properties given that the housing of mixed age groups in dwellings with communal access can be problematic due to potential conflicts of lifestyle. It is therefore proposed that in terms of letting any vacant dwellings declassification be undertaken in two phases as follows:

Phase One

Where any original sheltered tenant remains resident within a block of flats then vacant dwellings will only normally be let to applicants over 40 years of age. Any exceptions to this policy will need the express prior approval of the Housing Manager.

Phase Two

Where no original sheltered tenants remain resident within a block of flats then vacant dwellings will be let in accordance with the standard allocations procedure.

- 6.5 As the buildings in question will not be closing, it is proposed that any tenant wishing to move into sheltered accommodation, will be given priority for transfer and assistance with the cost of a move up to a maximum of £250. In addition, assistance with the organisation of the move will be given by Housing staff. As the properties will be de-classified and not de-commissioned, the re-location package provided

upon the de-commissioning of fifty one units of accommodation at Bass's Crescent and Smallthorn Place is not appropriate

7. Warden Call Equipment

- 7.1 The vast majority of the warden call equipment in the sheltered schemes was installed during the 1980's. Although the amount of faults reported are rising annually, this "first generation" warden call equipment is still robust and provides a comparatively safe and reliable service. At present maintenance of the equipment is still supported by the manufacturer however new parts have not been manufactured for a number of years and spare parts are obtained from systems that have been removed from schemes that have been upgraded. Although they have yet to put a date on it, the manufacturer has been suggesting for some time that they are running out of spare parts and are expected to soon announce that they can no longer support this equipment. It is therefore appropriate to consider replacing the existing equipment with more up to date "fourth generation" equipment.
- 7.2 Upgrading the equipment will not only ensure that the warden call equipment is safe and maintainable but will also allow the sheltered housing service to take advantage of and promote emerging technologies that support people to maintain their independence in their own home. The latest generation of warden call equipment would reduce the time taken for calls to reach the CareLine Centre, enable better quality speech and be fully compatible with a range of developing "wire less Telecare" products such as:
- Fall detectors
 - Activity sensors
 - Flood detectors
 - Heat and fire detectors
 - Carbon monoxide detectors
 - Security devices
 - Bogus caller buttons
 - Wandering patient alarms
 - Bed occupancy alarms
- 7.3 Being able to "bolt on" such equipment as outlined in 7.2 would enable the sheltered housing service and CareLine to work in conjunction with Health and Social Services to ensure older people can stay in their own homes for as long as possible. Providing this type of 'Telecare' capability would not only enhance the service for our customers, but is likely to be a significant income generator in the future as the statutory organisations seek to reduce the number of older people going into hospital or residential care.
- 7.4 This equipment is compatible with system amendments carried out following the Best Value Re-Inspection in December 2002. The anticipated cost across the service is £350,000.

8. Provision of White Goods

- 8.1 Currently, the majority of Sheltered Housing tenants are provided with a range of white goods, dependant upon the facilities provided by the scheme, without incurring a service charge for the goods. For example most residents have a cooker provided whilst a number of others also have washing machines and tumble dryers.
- 8.2 Whilst historically the aim of this policy may have been to enhance provision in this area, it is now highlighted that the cost of maintenance and replacement of these items, which is in excess of £14,500 per annum, is not considered sustainable unless an additional service charge is made. Typical costs incurred for the replacement of white goods are as follows;
- Washing Machine / Dryer £332
 - Gas Cooker £300
 - Electric Cooker £250
 - Refrigerator £150
- 8.3 The provision of such white goods is not general practice amongst other Local Authorities. Anecdotal evidence from new tenants moving into sheltered housing suggests that this service is not a high priority for them and in some cases are indignant that they cannot take their own goods with them.
- 8.4 It is proposed that all white goods that have been provided by the Council are gifted to the existing tenants subject to an appropriate safety check having been first completed. This would mean that the tenants take responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the equipment and be responsible for replacing the equipment as and when it is no longer useable.
- 8.5 This change in service provision would also be the subject of consultation via a newsletter and the community wardens.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 The audit of access requirements as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, yet to be reported to Committee, has identified that an investment of £113,000 is required to bring the sheltered schemes with communal lounges in to line with Act. However, this investment will form part of the total development bid for bringing all corporate buildings in to line with the required standards.
- 9.2 The updating of the Warden call equipment across the remaining schemes will require an investment of approximately £350,000.
- 9.3 To bring the remaining schemes within the recommended standards, including the refurbishment of communal areas, an investment of over

£1m will be required. The detailed costs are currently being worked upon.

- 9.4 The proposed declassification of sheltered schemes as detailed in the report entails 104 properties. The cost of providing the sheltered housing service are separated within the budget process as they are met (for the proportion of tenants in receipt of benefit) by Supporting People funding from the County Council. The costs of the service will not necessarily reduce in line with any declassification of schemes rather than with the reduction in the number tenants receiving the Careline and Community Warden Services. It may be that a significant proportion of the tenants affected by the declassification will choose to continue receiving the services and in those cases the effect on income will be neutral. However as properties become available for letting the new tenants will be less likely to want or need the services available and therefore over time income will decrease although if, as proposed, the non-sheltered bungalows are brought into the sheltered stock then the overall affect of the changes would be minimal.
- 9.5 Should all existing tenants take up the offer to transfer accommodation, the maximum cost for assistance with removals will be no more than £22,000.
- 9.6 The cessation of the provision of white goods would provide a saving of approximately £14,500 per annum.

10. Corporate Implications

- 10.1 Providing a vision for the Sheltered Housing Service is an outstanding action from the Best Value inspections and will be examined further by CPA inspectors due to visit the authority in January 2004.
- 10.2 Development of the vision to this stage has involved working with all stakeholder partners such as Social Services, PCT and the voluntary sector. The further development of this process will engage those partners further and lead to a more comprehensive approach to older people provision across the District.

11. Community Implications

- 11.1 The agreement of a clear strategic vision and standards for Sheltered Housing will allow the council to make the next step in improving the housing services provided for older people in South Derbyshire