

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 28 NOVEMBER 2017

TITLE: REVIEW OF SHELTERED HOUSING (PHASE 2) – FINAL REPORT

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RECOMMENDED that:

- A** The Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet the adoption of the proposals detailed in paragraphs 15 to 31 of the report.

BACKGROUND

1. The Terms of Reference for this review were approved by the Committee in September 2015 and were to consider and make recommendations on how the Council's objectives for housing related support (HRS) (Supported Housing) should be pursued within the reducing resources available to the Council. The scope of the review is outlined in Appendix A.
2. The Committee agreed for the review to be undertaken in phases, with Phase 1 making recommendations helping to deal with the reductions in funding for the Telecare and Support Services by Essex County Council (ECC). Phase 2 of the review was to include a longer term service appraisal.

THE SUPPORTED HOUSING SERVICE

3. The Council's Supported Housing Service consists of 16 sheltered housing schemes, one independent living (extra care) scheme for the frail elderly, and a community support function for 1,067 service users living independently within the local community.
4. ECC formally acted as the responsible organisation and commissioned HRS services from the Council on a contractual basis. HRS commissioned services that were funded by ECC and formed part of the Government's Health and Social Care agenda that promoted older persons wellbeing and independence. Legislation does not stipulate specific services to fulfil this requirement, however, the Council's role as a landlord is to both maintain the fabric of the building, and deliver appropriate HRS services as part of the management of its tenancies.
5. Following the funding cessation of the HRS services by ECC, previous recommendations by the Committee, approved by Cabinet included:

- a) The outsourcing of the out-of-hours response service;
- b) A two year phasing in of charges to service users of telecare and community support services;
- c) The implementation of an Intensive Housing Management charge which is eligible for housing benefit and covers the cost of the housing management and health and safety proportion of the Supported Housing Officer (SHO) role;
- d) The introduction of charges for use of sheltered scheme communal facilities by outside agencies; and
- e) The charging for telecare and community support services.

CONCLUSIONS

6. The importance of appropriate HRS as part of older people's health and wellbeing remains an imperative in promoting independence, avoiding hospital admission.
7. Whilst Harlow has the lowest proportion of residents aged over 65 compared to Essex as a whole, there is an expected increase of 21 percent between 2015 and 2025 which will represent 17 percent of the total population of Harlow, equating to 2,800 more people expecting HRS services. This ageing population will put greater demand on HRS provided by the Council at a time of budget constraints, as well on the wider social care services. The consultation with users has also confirmed that the service is deemed to remain vital to health and wellbeing. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for Harlow is outlined in Appendix C.
8. The review has concluded that the Council's supported housing service delivers good performance, demonstrating examples of innovation, with excellent prospects for continuous improvement. Annual accreditation is provided externally by the Telecare Services Authority (TSA) which helps to provide validation on the management of associated processes and outcomes.
9. Generally the schemes are popular in terms of requests for housing, with no significant hard to let issues. The review has considered each scheme individually to assess its viability for the future. Analysis has confirmed there is no further requirement for any change of use, being appropriate for future need. Condition surveys have also advised that the sheltered housing stock is of a good standard, meeting modern requirements. Details of the stock condition survey are outlined in the service review report (attached as Appendix A.)
10. Significantly, however, it has affirmed the need for the Council to continue to enable the delivery of HRS services recognizing the role it performs locally as part of the delivery of its Corporate Plan priorities.

11. The review has also reaffirmed the need to charge for HRS services, benchmarking where appropriate, in order to demonstrate value for money. Councillors have asked where affordability has been identified and that Officers work with affected individuals on how any financial burdens can be mitigated. This maybe through benefit entitlement, families making a financial contribution, or national support organizations.
12. Recognition has identified the need for an appropriately funded renewed regional/national social care strategy, working in effective partnerships with all support providers targeting resources meeting local needs. Local evidence suggests an on-going need to provide additional resources to priority activities, such as independent living schemes such as Sumners Farm Close.
13. Consultation with service users has highlighted that service delivery should be needs led, requiring change to accommodate the reduced level of resources available. Support being directed to those most needing it, identified through evidence based risk assessments and support planning processes.

PROPOSALS

14. The outcomes from the review are detailed in appendices A to E. The recommendations are proposed as an attempt to provide an effective framework for reducing resources both within the Council's General Fund (GF), and Housing Revenue Account. Balancing priorities against reduced resources with the wider priorities of the local council landlord service.

Financial Plan (5 years)

15. It is recommended to add to the current HRS services charges, seek additional income opportunities, as well as making best use of older persons designated stock. A financial plan is outlined in Appendix A.
16. Officers have been working with service users of HRS, consulting widely with them and their families to ensure awareness has been raised of the funding gaps, signposting benefit entitlement, as well as possible financial support from other agencies. This is in an attempt to maximize income.
17. Consulted families often decided to pay for HRS services to ensure peace of mind. In addition, on occasion, organisations offered funding support supporting vulnerable people who may have had a connection to them in the past such as the British Legion. This included funding for emergency alarm services for ex-service personnel with financial need.
18. A number of additional service charges were considered. In order to maintain the principles of un-pooling service charges introduced in 2007, it is proposed for the charges for the cleaning of communal areas at Sumners Farm Close and communal window cleaning in all sheltered housing/de-commissioned schemes only be un-pooled from April 2018. It is anticipated this will have a neutral effect on the HRA, as well as and service users, as their rent will be

reduced accordingly.

19. It is also proposed to increase the number of telecare support users, installing alarms in previous 're-designated' schemes as well as general needs properties. In the longer term it is expected that the financial gain to the Council will be £50,166 per annum.

Intensive housing support

20. It is also proposed to continue with the focus for the service to be on a needs led rather than a wants led service, historically been delivered. This continues the recommendation of previous Scrutiny committees. Specific on-going changes, if recommended will involve routine visits being reduced from three to two per week based on identified risk and support plans. Tenants, however, will continue to have access to the 24 hour emergency alarm monitoring service if required.
21. Importantly, it is also intended to carry out new pre-tenancy assessment visits for prospective tenants to ensure the appropriateness of the allocation and support requirements identified through the evidence based risk assessment and support planning process.
22. Review of the current staffing structure and future support requirements of HRS service users has realised efficiency savings with a suggested removal of two vacant posts. In addition, the current role of the Sheltered Housing Officer (SHO), which has been in place since 2009, will need to change to a more generic housing Support and Telecare Officer role and take on additional wider housing management responsibilities which include tenancy sign up, pre-tenancy assessments, and contractual landlord 21 day visits. This will fully align HRS to wider housing support arrangements and provide further efficiency savings totalling £53,418 per annum. A proposed staff structure is outlined in Appendix E.

Meeting Housing Need

23. Current properties, that are available to allocate for older people, include specialist housing for HRS services (e.g. sheltered housing), general needs housing (e.g. older persons bungalows), as well as adapted properties for tenants with mobility needs. It is proposed to align these property types, ensuring all identified properties which are suitable for older people/people with mobility needs also have installed housing related support (e.g. dispersed alarm system with linked smoke detector). This will enable the more appropriate tackling of the meeting of housing need, by integrating all older persons' properties through the published Allocations Policy.
24. In addition, it is proposed to align the current allocations 'age profile', in order to enhance the requirement for older persons who require appropriate property and support to 55 years of age. This is in recognition for the growing support needs of this age group. It is also proposed, for flexibility to be given to younger age groups with identified mobility needs (e.g. forty year old

applicants with support issues). Telecare alarm equipment will also be installed in each of the re-designated older person's properties as they become void, and to charge for its use.

25. In response to the identification of extra care housing requirements going forward, it is proposed to extend the number of extra frail units at Sumners Farm Close by a further six units. This will be provided by using the current vacant farm house located in the grounds of the Sumners Farm Close which in the past has been used as office space.
26. The proposal is to convert the farm house into six, one bedroomed disabled adapted flats, which will Link to the main Sumners Farm Close scheme and provide much needed extra care accommodation for older people. Currently there are 14 people on the waiting list.
27. These proposals will provide an additional rental income of £26,195 per annum. If the refurbishment proposals are recommended, it will be included in the housing capital programme estimates for 2018/19, to be approved by Cabinet, with an expected capital cost of £500,000. It will also be requested for a contribution from the retained capital housing receipts. The cost to the capital programme is £350,000, with £150,000 being funded from pooled capital receipts. The retention of centralised pooled capital receipts is appropriate where there is a plan in place to replace affordable housing.

Increasing current service charges

28. The introduction of HRS service charges has been approved by the Council, in response to the ceasing of funding from ECC, since 2016. Following a benchmarking exercise with other service providers in Essex, it is proposed that the cost of the telecare alarm service charge be increased by 10 percent. The outcome of the benchmarking exercise is detailed on page 21 of Appendix A.

Service Provision	Existing Charge	Proposed Charge 2018/19
Monitoring Only	£1.70	£1.87
Monitoring and Response	£3.89	£4.28

Use of Assisted Technology

29. Members of the Scrutiny Committee have continued to stress the role and importance of assisted technology as part of a holistic HRS support framework. Assisted Technology provides a range of alarm systems and peripherals to enable people to remain independent with a range of support mechanisms. Examples include, smoke detectors, flood detectors, CO2 detectors, bogus callers/door open alerts, and 'fall' detectors.
30. It is proposed to increase the number of these systems working with ECC, and to charge the service user for their use.

31. The aggregate value of the proposed new five year financial plan with efficiency gains and increased income opportunities totals £575,184. The plan is outlined within the service review report in Appendix A. If recommended, it will be provided as part of the 2018/19 revenue estimates approval process.

NEXT STEPS

32. Officers will consult with service users and staff to inform them of the outcomes of the review, and recommendations made by Committee. The review implementation plan is outlined in Appendix B, and this will provide a service planning performance framework going forward. Officers will also take the opportunity to strengthen the annual planning linkages, realising further synergies within the wider housing services portfolio, as well as developing an effective marketing strategy in order to raise awareness of the value of HRS services, and their availability.
33. Recently, the Government has announced a new funding proposal for what they have categorised as Supported Housing. The approach, it appears, focuses on a number of supported housing activities which include homelessness, extra care housing, as well as the 'rent' for sheltered housing. No detail has been provided, however, it proposes to implement the proposals from April 2020. The Government have described the funding approach as 'a type of social rent that recognises the vital role that these homes play in supporting older and vulnerable people'. The Council expects for a consultation document to be provided, and an opportunity to give feedback analysing any implications.

IMPLICATIONS

Place(includes Sustainability)

As contained within the report.

Author: **Graeme Bloomer, Head of Place**

Finance (Includes ICT)

The Financial implications are set out in the report and appendices. Any recommendations made to Cabinet by the Committee will be incorporated in to the budget setting process for 2018/19 and reported to the Cabinet in January 2018.

Author: **Simon Freeman, Head of Finance**

Housing

HRS services are considered discretionary activities and need to be prioritised and aligned to other landlord statutory responsibilities.

Author: **Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

Community Wellbeing (includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)

The importance of appropriate housing related supported, as part of older people's health and wellbeing remains an imperative in promoting independence, avoiding hospital admission helps to address issues improving the quality of life and wellbeing of Harlow residents.

Author: **Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

Governance (includes HR)

The provision of housing related support is a discretionary services, however when undertaking any review of that could affect people who may have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 the Council should be mindful of any impact there may be on those persons. In making any decision the Council needs to have due regard to the Equality Duty under s146 of the Equalities Act in any decision it makes, having had due regard to any consultation results obtained.

The Council will also need to ensure that any requirements regarding data sharing are correctly identified, and the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation are implemented in any contracts entered into regarding technology or processing activities.

The Council will also need to ensure that any changes to staff are properly considered under employment statutes, regulations and guidance.

Author: **Amanda Julian, Legal Services Manager**

Appendices

- Appendix A – Supported Housing Review Report
- Appendix B – Implementation Plan
- Appendix C – A Profile of People Living in Harlow
- Appendix D – Tenant/Staff Consultation
- Appendix E – Proposed Staff Structure

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

- ECC - Essex County Council
- SHO - Supported Housing Officer
- HRS - Housing Related Support
- TSA - Telecare Services Authority
- HRA – Housing Revenue Account