

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 3 JULY 2012

Title:

SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Keith Webster]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

A comprehensive review of the sheltered housing service has been undertaken. The remit included financial viability, quality of service, condition of accommodation and tenant satisfaction. Following the completion of the review an action plan has been developed to deliver improvements.

This report seeks to inform members of the current service and to advise on progress against the action plan.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

There is a considerable need for affordable sheltered housing across the Borough.

This report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities of;
Affordable Housing
Value for Money
Understanding our residents' needs.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

This Delivery Plan concerns the provision of affordable housing, usually for older people, which has implications for social inclusion and community cohesion. A number of current residents have some form of disability and the review seeks to ensure that these needs are adequately catered for.

Environment and Climate Change Implications:

There are no environmental implications.

Resource/Value for Money Implications:

The Council receives Supporting People Grant of £193,377 from Surrey County Council in respect of the sheltered housing service. This is due for review in 2013.

Several of the sheltered housing schemes require some investment in the fabric of the buildings to bring them up to current standards. This will be undertaken through the planned maintenance/reinvestment budget.

One scheme requires more substantial remodelling to provide satisfactory living arrangements, removing the necessity for residents to share bathrooms.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Background

1. Changes in the housing finance regime have created the opportunity for the Council to invest in the fabric of their accommodation, to provide modern comfortable homes.
2. The Council is committed to providing high quality support services to sheltered housing residents, whilst delivering value for money and protecting the Supporting People Grant funding.

Introduction

3. The remit for the review was an in-depth examination of current practice, against the Quality Assessment Framework, highlighting good practice, issues of concern, and considering value for money/service efficiencies. In addition, demand for individual schemes/demographics and the physical environment were to be taken into account.
4. A specialist was appointed to undertake the work. Steve Hickman-Brown has experience in both the client (housing provider) and commissioner (Supporting People) roles.
5. All sheltered housing managers and assistant managers were interviewed. Interviews were held with the Supporting People Commissioners, Careline providers, residents and internal WBC services providing support to the service.
6. The report, as attached as Annexe 1, has highlighted some service failings amongst some of the sheltered schemes, and identified cost overruns to be addressed.
7. An action plan has been produced to address the issues raised, and sheltered scheme staff are currently being trained in appropriate areas. A progress report against the action plan is attached at Annexe 2.
8. Separately plans are under development for capital investment in the stock where necessary. Most investment needs are doors/windows, redecoration, with some minor remodelling. These works will be funded from the planned works and reinvestment budget.
9. Rolston House in Haslemere requires some major remodelling. This scheme currently offers shared bathrooms, and as a result is unpopular with applicants for sheltered housing. There is significant demand in the area, but the facilities are deterring potential tenants. Currently voids at this scheme are running at 50%; a loss of potential income of £75,400 per annum. A feasibility study will be drawn up and costed, and presented to Council in September.

10. The majority of the schemes have vacant properties, previously used as manager's accommodation. Feasibility reports are being drawn up to convert these large properties into additional sheltered units, to maximise income. These will be presented to Council in September.
11. Further work is underway with the Council's finance officers to address the funding deficits, but it is believed that remodelling the schemes will very quickly lead to full occupancy, in addition to the extra units created through conversion of managers' accommodation. This will need to be offset against the cost of the capital investment.
12. The report sets out a number of options for the service going forward for consideration by members.

Conclusion

13. The review has highlighted some serious shortcomings in the service, and identified that scheme staff have suffered from poor management and lack of training. To their credit, the staff have welcomed the additional investment in them and are keen to receive the training. The schemes themselves require some capital works to return them to their former glory.
14. This review highlights the issue of the staffing structure within the sheltered housing service, particularly in the light of possible future reductions in funding. However, the officers' view is that the immediate imperative is to concentrate on improving the quality of service.

Recommendation

It is recommended that

1. Option 1 set out in Annexe 1 be adopted;
2. existing staffing levels be maintained to enable the progress plan at Annexe 2 to be adopted and implemented; and
3. should the funding be reduced further in future years, officers report further on the implications of this for the service.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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