

<b>20 November 2013</b>		<b>ITEM: 6</b>
<b>Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Sheltered Housing Review</b>		
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Val Morris Cook		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non Key	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Dermot Moloney, Strategic Lead Housing		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Barbara Brownlee, Director of Housing		
<b>This report is Public</b>		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To set out options for the future delivery and management of the sheltered housing service.		

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Sheltered housing was created 40 years ago to provide older people with choices about where they live. The accommodation was designed to deliver a higher level of care to older people than general needs housing.

In recent years the national debate on sheltered housing has shifted policy from a focus on providing care, to the promotion of independent living.

The context for why change is needed has been framed by the government report, 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods'. This describes a future whereby in 2026, there will be 2.4 million more older households than there are today.

Thurrock's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment shows that by 2033 the population group aged 50-64 is projected to increase by 50%, and the population group aged 85 plus is projected to double. It is necessary for the council, like many social landlords, to consider its arrangements for managing the sheltered housing service.

The last review of sheltered housing was undertaken in 2011 and made references to the changing demographic profile of older people. It concluded that the arrangements for delivering sheltered housing would have to change, in order to meet the requirements of an aging population.

To build upon this, in April 2013 the service was reviewed and centred around three key issues:-

- **The demand for sheltered housing accommodation**
- **The current service model**
- **How service charges should be applied**

## **The demand for sheltered housing accommodation**

The Government paper 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' provides evidence that, as we age, most of us want to remain at home. In order to meet this aspiration, schemes should contain the following features:

- Close proximity to shops and amenities
- Accommodation which can be simply adapted to meet people's changing needs over time
- Independent access into and around the built environment

The design, location, and adaptability of a number of the current schemes in Thurrock, does not allow the council to meet the standards set by Lifetime Homes.

Against this background, the review examined the number of bids received for sheltered accommodation, between 2011- 2013.

The evidence points to the existence of a number of schemes which are becoming increasingly harder to let. There were 14 schemes (representing 48% of the total number) which received an average of 5 bids or less for available properties.

This lends support to the assertion that for some tenants a proportion of our sheltered housing schemes no longer provides a solution to meet their housing need. It creates the situation of a potential oversupply of units within our total sheltered housing stock. The review gives consideration to making the surplus stock available to a broader number of residents.

## **The current service model**

The model for sheltered housing has evolved from a residential warden service which had previously provided an on site presence, seven days a week. The council now employs 29 Sheltered Housing Officers, each responsible for managing an individual scheme. The review explored the role of the SHOs. It was found that the SHO remit is to provide services only to those tenants who live on a sheltered scheme. There has been a missed opportunity to engage with the wider community and to address the issue of social isolation felt by many older people living alone with little or no support.

The review considered opportunities to refresh the sheltered model, and widen the scope of services currently being provided.

## **How service charges should be applied**

The cost of delivering the sheltered housing service is over £1m per year, and is paid for by the HRA. Sheltered tenants although previously required to meet the costs of the weekly service charge, have not been required to pay since 2012.

The service charge costs are currently proportioned across the HRA and the charge is collected from all tenants in Thurrock, irrespective of whether they use the sheltered service or not. To address this inequity this review proposes that sheltered tenants should pay a service charge, and gives consideration to consulting on the level of the charge to be introduced.

### **Learning from other providers**

The findings of this report have been informed by the experiences of sheltered providers from 14 neighbouring authorities. The experience shows that:

- 1) Sheltered housing providers have either introduced or are considering changes to their services.
- 2) The experience of changing sheltered property to general needs housing is that consultation has to be comprehensive, capturing the views of residents, family members and local councillors.
- 3) There is a single accountable person with responsibility for sheltered housing.
- 4) Providers adopted a common principle of charging sheltered tenants directly for the services received.
- 5) Change programmes must be supported by members.

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1.1 Note that some of our current supply of sheltered housing properties are becoming increasingly harder to let and agree the proposal to consider and consult on some change of use.**
- 1.2 Agree the proposals to introduce a new model for sheltered housing and agree the consultation model for the engagement with tenants and all other key stakeholders.**
- 1.3 Agree to consult on the proposal to reintroduce service charges for users of the service.**
- 1.4 Agree to the introduction of a new Tenancy Agreement, in line with the introduction of a new general needs Tenancy Agreement, which will include the requirement to pay service charges and meets the criteria for Housing Benefit applications set out by the Department for Work Pensions.**

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### Introduction and Context

- 2.1 Thurrock's sheltered housing stock was built in the 1960s and 70s to provide a 'last stop' accommodation option for older people who had reached retirement age. The schemes were designed with security in mind and tenants were supported in their homes seven days a week, by resident wardens. Although the resident warden model has now been phased out by most sheltered providers, schemes continue to be favoured by older people who seek security and the companionship of their peer group. Though sheltered housing schemes at their best provide security and a sense of community spirit, opinions on what the service should offer to older people has changed in recent years.

**“Older people contribute greatly to community cohesion and have a key role in regenerating areas of previously poor housing, or areas from which housing has retreated – such as town centres. The new homes on offer for them must make older people think ‘this is where I want to be’, not ‘has it come to this?’ ”**

- Building Positive Futures in Thurrock March 2012

### New standards for sheltered housing

- 2.2 In 1997 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation introduced the Lifetime Home standards providing a series of 16 design criteria intended to make homes more adaptable for lifetime use, at a minimal cost.
- 2.3 The standard has been adopted by the government who later commissioned the HAPPI Homes standard (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) in 2009 to 'advance existing good practice and promote new ideas'.
- 2.4 The HAPPI Homes standard enhances the work of Lifetime Homes by raising awareness of the variety of accommodation solutions for older people. The HAPPI Homes innovation panel has produced case studies of different sheltered developments in both the UK and Europe. The developments are promoted as exemplary models of how a range of different housing solutions can be delivered to meet the aspirations of older persons.
- 2.5 It is apparent that the HAPPI Homes standard intends to push the boundaries and promote creative thinking, and challenges providers to offer older people a choice of accommodation. The learning from research and case studies describes an emerging older client group, who are discerning in the decisions they make about their future housing accommodation. There is no longer a 'one size fits all' model for sheltered housing. The best schemes have in common good access to social care and health, local amenities, and social networks which support independent living.

2.6 Research undertaken by the HAPPI Homes Innovation Panel in response to the question:

**'What kind of housing will meet our needs as we grow older'** concluded the following:

- Because we are more likely to spend more time in our homes, we will need more space, light, comfort and convenience.
- We will look for safe and secure, healthy, attractive environments, close to the shops and amenities we need, and to our social networks.
- We will want homes that can be adapted to our changing needs, and do not force us to move into an institutional setting if we require more care and support.
- Solutions to our housing needs will very often be found in purpose- built new homes that are specially designed and planned with older people in mind.

### **Derry Avenue**

2.7 There are ambitious plans to create a specialised housing scheme for older people in Derry Avenue, South Ockendon. It is intended that Derry Avenue will be a flagship scheme in Thurrock. Typical design features are:

- Generously dimensioned hallways.
- Large store, adaptable as a wheelchair storage space.
- Oversized to allow for adaptation into a fully wheelchair accessible bathroom, plus 'soft spot' in master bedroom partition.
- Kitchens are generously proportioned to provide ease of circulation for residents who are mobility impaired or use a wheelchair.
- A sliding screen gives an open, spacious quality. Flexibility of use for second bedroom.
- All rooms open onto a generous external balcony overlooking the new communal garden.
- Windows to the kitchen allow for natural light and allow views to the communal areas.
- Shelving/seating adjacent to flat entrances.

2.8 The Derry Avenue scheme has been designed to link with the South Ockendon Centre, supporting the Council's wider strategy of community cohesion. The South Ockendon Centre will operate as a community hub providing an integrated approach to the delivery of council and voluntary sector services.

2.9 The aspiration to promote Derry Avenue as the blueprint for future schemes does highlight the lack of opportunities to replicate the design standards of HAPPI homes within the existing sheltered housing stock.

### 3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

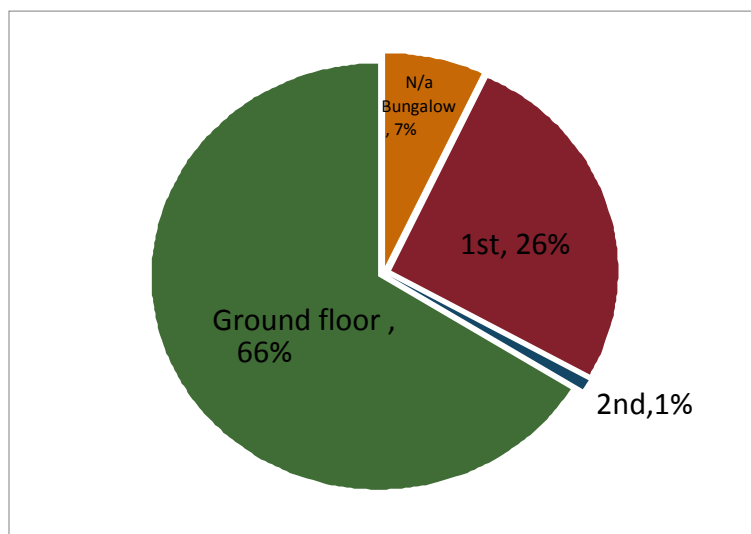
#### 3.1 The Demand for Sheltered Housing Accommodation

3.1.1 The review considered the demand for sheltered housing by analysing the number of bids over a 3 year period. The evidence points to the existence of a number of schemes which are becoming increasingly hard to let. One of the contributory factors is that 83% of sheltered housing units which are on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor or above are without a lift. In general it is more difficult to let properties of this type to older people. They will undoubtedly wish to avoid the scenario described in the 2011 sheltered review which found that :

**‘Tenants, unable to negotiate stairs due to their declining mobility, were left trapped in their homes until they were forced to move to alternative accommodation’.**

#### **Lift Services in Sheltered Scheme - 1<sup>st</sup> Floor and Above**

3.1.2 There are 611 sheltered properties located in buildings on the 1st floor or above, and of these properties, 83% have no lift service. During 2011- 2013, of the bids made, 73% were for ground floor accommodation, including bungalows. This is illustrated in Table 1.



3.1.3 The majority of tenants who had bid for sheltered housing expressed an overwhelming desire to live in ground floor accommodation. The number of bids for ground floor properties is out of proportion with the supply available. It is suggested that this demand for ground floor properties is largely driven by the undesirability of the first floor accommodation, where the vast majority is offered without a lift service.

3.1.4 The table in appendix 1 describes the distribution of sheltered properties with and without lifts.

- 3.1.5 In addition to the challenges created through an absence of lifts, there are also schemes which have either poor proximity to local amenities or are built on either a hill or a slope. The research provides affirmation that these factors have a bearing on the popularity of schemes. An example is Rookery Court.
- 3.1.6 The sheltered complex at Rookery Court provides accommodation for 36 residents in West Thurrock. The complex has excellent landscaping and a good aesthetic appearance. It is however built on a hill and is a distance from local shops.
- 3.1.7 An analysis of Rookery Court confirms that over the last 3 years, where accommodation has become available for let, there has been on average one bid per property. This does suggest that those schemes which are located near shops and transport, and are built on terrain which can easily be negotiated, are more likely to attract bids from tenants.

### **Assessment of Schemes**

- 3.1.8 The council, together with other providers of sheltered housing is making progressive steps to offer the type of accommodation suggested by both the Lifetime Homes and HAPPI Homes standards (Elizabeth Gardens and Derry Avenue).
- 3.1.9 The debate in Thurrock must now be centred on what should be done with stock that can be considered outdated when measured against modern standards.
- 3.1.10 It is proposed that all 29 schemes are assessed to identify those which are best suited to provide sheltered accommodation in the future. The assessment should be based on a scoring methodology which evaluates;
- The average number of bids per available property.
  - The location of schemes to shops, GPs, public transport.
  - Accessibility to the scheme.
- 3.1.11 The data provided by the assessment will identify those properties which are least desired by tenants, and will inform decisions on how the building asset can be better utilised.
- 3.1.12 There is an increasing demand for one bedroom, general needs properties in Thurrock, which replicates the national trend of people living in smaller households. This creates a strong business case for investigating the potential to re-designate some sheltered schemes as general needs housing. The number of applicants for studio & one bedroom properties is illustrated in

table 2 below. The data has been collected over a 3 year period and shows that a significant number of people seeking accommodation are applicants for studio and one bedroom properties.

Table 2 - Applicants for studio and one bedroom properties:

Year	No of applicants	Percentage of overall applicant list
1st April 2011	2,431	52%
1st April 2012	2,127	45%
1st April 2013	1,804	53%

3.1.13 The re-designation of sheltered properties to the general needs housing would accelerate the opportunities for other sections of the community to acquire their own home and also assists with the council's downsizing agenda.

### **Learning for Thurrock**

3.1.14 The scope of the review included research on the services being provided by neighbouring authorities in Essex. Fourteen authorities were asked to participate in a benchmark survey, conducted throughout May 2013. The authorities who participated are listed in appendix 2.

3.1.15 The benchmarking comprised of two parts:

- A telephone survey of all 14 service providers.
- Site visits to 2 providers.

3.1.16 As part of this benchmarking exercise discussions took place on the approach used by providers to deal with surplus or low demand stock and their experiences of changing sheltered schemes to general needs housing. The research revealed that a number of providers had changed sheltered schemes to general needs housing and that other providers who had not made the change, were considering this as an option. The providers based their decisions on whether the existing stock was able to meet both the current and future accommodation needs for older people.

### **Case study**

3.1.17 One of the providers de-designated 150 sheltered units to general needs housing. The reasons for the change were described in the business case for the change:

- Stairs not suitable ( for those with restricted mobility)
- Blocks without lifts
- Long walk to nearest bus stop



- Too far from shops, and health care facilities

3.1.18 In this example, a lead officer was appointed to support tenants during the process, ensuring effective communication throughout. The learning experience of the provider was that a measured approach has to be taken, allowing sufficient time for consultation to manage stakeholders and local interest.

### **The approach to managing change**

3.1.19 In managing any change from sheltered housing to general needs, it would not be proposed to introduce a decant programme. Any change process agreed will be informed by tenant consultation, and will move at a pace which best captures the views of those who are directly affected.

### **Sensitive lets**

3.1.20 The allocations policy allows for the letting of property to people according to their age, sometimes referred to as sensitive lets. This has in the past been applied to sheltered housing (ex-warden accommodation). It is recommended that any change from sheltered to general needs housing would be phased.

3.1.21 The experience of some providers who made the change from sheltered to general needs housing, was that a policy of letting accommodation to people who were 45 plus years and above, had successfully allowed them to fill empty properties during a period of transition. The introduction of an age criteria had avoided potential conflict caused by the different lifestyle choices of the older and younger residents easing the transition period for existing tenants.

## **3.2 The Current Service Model**

3.2.1 The 29 sheltered housing schemes in Thurrock are each managed by site based Sheltered Housing Officers (SHOs), working Monday to Friday. An out of hours service is provided by Careline. The service is delivered by a team of Sheltered Housing Officers. The service is also supported by a centrally based Sheltered Housing Manager, who co-ordinates health & safety compliance and policies and procedures.

3.2.2 The day to day service has traditionally been provided through support plans, offered to tenants living in a sheltered scheme. Officers have not been formally trained to deliver healthcare. In practice the support offer for residents comprises primarily of a 'house call' to check on the well being of tenants, but only where this had been expressed on a support plan.

- 3.2.3 The current building management service requires basic health and safety functions to be delivered (e.g. test fire alarms) but does not give staff responsibility for auditing contracted services relating to repairs or cleaning.
- 3.2.4 The current job profile is underdeveloped and has not kept pace with a changed agenda for sheltered housing. The focus has been on the management of individual schemes with little reference to wider national issues such as increases in dementia, and supporting the large number of older people who are owner occupiers to live independently.

### **Learning for Thurrock**

- 3.2.5 As part of the benchmarking exercise detailed above, neighbouring authorities were contacted. The aims of the benchmarking were to gather information on the models adopted for providing new services. References are made in this report to 'provider' and Sheltered Housing Officer (SHO). As guide to the reader, the following definitions will apply:
- The term provider is used as a generic reference to describe all organisations delivering sheltered housing services, ALMO, Authority, and RSL.
  - Sheltered Housing Officer (SHO) is used as a generic term for the person responsible for the day to day management of a scheme, regardless of whether the provider is an ALMO, Authority or Registered Provider.
- 3.2.6 In explaining their drivers for change, providers responded by saying there was a need to 'cut their cloth accordingly' following the reduction of Supporting People (SP) grants. Thurrock faced a similar challenge in 2011 when it lost its SP grant but there was no subsequent change in the delivery model to take account of this funding loss.

### **How the service was changed**

#### **3.2.7 Team working**

In a departure from the model of an individual SHO working at a designated scheme, providers reorganised their staff so that they now worked in teams. In the most common examples, the teams comprised of 4-5 people who operated within a geographically defined area.

Providers rotated staff so that they developed familiarity with all schemes, and were therefore able to work across the entire sheltered housing portfolio.

The evolution to team working had removed the isolation felt by SHOs who had previously worked separately, from their managers and colleagues. Team working has enthusiastically been adopted by providers who had previously noted low morale amongst staff, caused by the negative effects of lone working.

Prior to the change, a provider described the results of their own feedback received from SHOs:

**“They never saw managers”.**

During site visits undertaken in May 2013, SHOs were interviewed about their experiences of team working. They revealed that despite some initial resistance, they had benefitted from the change. The support now offered through working side by side with other SHOs had enabled staff to better manage day to day tasks.

In describing the impact of the changes, one group of staff spoke positively about how job satisfaction had improved, as well as their sense of empowerment:

**“We now feel that we manage the scheme”.**

### **3.2.8 Mobile working**

The providers who had introduced mobile working had previously employed SHOs to be based within a scheme, five days a week. This is noteworthy because it replicates the current model in Thurrock.

The view of the Sheltered Housing Managers was that employing staff to work full time on schemes had to be balanced against a service need.

It was acknowledged that there were increasing numbers of older people who were living active lifestyles without the requirement for a daily call. These tenants were therefore deriving little benefit from the on site presence of a SHO. For those tenants who required daily contact this was still provided however, the sheltered team were able to provide the service without the need to be permanently based on the site.

During this period of change it was recognised that services were not reaching older people who did not live in sheltered housing. In progressing from the model of the sheltered scheme as the hub for the service, opportunities had been created to engage with older people across all tenures.

### **New Sheltered Housing Model for Thurrock**

3.2.9 It is proposed to implement a new model that will introduce the following:

- Integrated team working, improving the consistency of services provided to older people.
- An outwardly looking service which is community based, rather than scheme based.
- Mobile teams, providing direct services to older people across all tenures, whether it is through staff operating at community hubs or undertaking home visits.

- Senior accountable management for sheltered housing, providing the service with a renewed focus and leadership.

### **Sheltered Housing Teams**

3.2.10 The service is proposed to be delivered through teams, in contrast to the segregation which currently exists amongst sheltered staff. The sheltered staff will operate as two teams, split along geographical areas.

3.2.11 Other providers reported that team working had increased motivation amongst their staff and they now felt supported in their roles. The providers offered the view that the change to team working had engendered collaboration amongst staff, and had eliminated the negative aspects of lone working.

### **Community hub services**

3.2.12 There is keen interest within the voluntary sector to increase links with the sheltered housing team. The community hub in South Ockenden provides an early example of how sheltered staff working outside of a scheme, are able to offer services to the wider community. The local sheltered housing staff have successfully provided a 'surgery' service from the hub. The introduction of a model of mobile teams will provide capacity to replicate the experience of South Ockenden hub elsewhere.

## **3.3 How Service Charges Should Be Applied**

### **3.3.1 The cost of sheltered housing**

- The budget for the current sheltered housing model, 2012-13, is £1.3million.
- The total salary costs, including on costs, is £713k.
- The aim of this review is to ensure VFM for sheltered housing residents.

### **Sheltered housing charges**

3.3.2 For those residents who were in receipt for housing benefits payments, the service charges were met by the Government's Supporting People (SP) fund. Following the withdrawal of SP funding in 2011, the council cabinet made a decision in January 2012, to end the weekly service charges for all sheltered tenants.

3.3.3 Despite the cessation of the weekly service charge, there still remains a cost for providing sheltered housing services. The charges are funded from the

HRA and currently all Thurrock tenants make a contribution, irrespective of whether or not they derive a service benefit. The rationale of charging all Thurrock residents for services which they are excluded from accessing is untenable.

- 3.3.4 The providers confirmed they had all experienced reductions in their SP funding. Although responses to how the reduction in SP funding was managed varied between the providers, they had all maintained the common principal of charging sheltered tenants directly for the services received.
- 3.3.5 It is proposed to base the service charge on the principle of covering staff costs. This will be dependant on the adoption of the new operating model.
- 3.3.6 The providers applied a weekly service charge which was bespoke to their individual service models. The average of the weekly service charge of the neighbouring authorities is £10.29. The aim is to ensure that the weekly service charge for Thurrock is a reduction on the average charge set by neighbouring authorities.

### **Impact of service charge on tenants**

- 3.3.7 Supporting People funding had previously met the cost of the service charge but this was now no longer the case. It is recognised that tenants on a low income will have concerns about their capacity to pay service charges. The adoption of a comprehensive consultation programme will identify those concerns in detail. In July 2013, a snapshot taken of tenants in sheltered accommodation revealed that 69% were in receipt of housing benefit.
- 3.3.8 Guidance published by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) confirms that tenants, providing that the eligibility criteria is met, could apply for housing benefit to meet the service charge cost. The DWP criteria was revised and published in April 2013. One of the first conditions for eligibility is that:

‘The right to occupy the accommodation is dependent upon the tenant paying service charges, for example where it forms part of the tenancy agreement.’

### **Tenancy agreement**

- 3.3.9 The reintroduction of service charges is intended to create fairness. It recognises that only those tenants, who use the service, should pay for the service. There is an equal recognition that the policy of charging has to enable support to be provided to those who cannot afford to pay.
- 3.3.10 The most practical support would be to create a tenancy agreement which supports those who need help, to obtain financial assistance through the housing benefit system. The current tenancy agreement makes no specific

references to the obligation to pay service charges for sheltered housing. The creation of a tenancy agreement for sheltered housing which introduces the obligation to pay the charge, will support low income tenants to meet the eligibility criteria for housing benefit.

#### **4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

4.1 The recommendations set out in this report proposes changes to the sheltered housing service. The reasons are described as part of the analysis of the options, and are informed by the learning experience of 14 neighbouring authorities.

#### **5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

5.1 The structure for the consultation process will be provided by the Thurrock Community Engagement tool kit. Tenants will be consulted on:

- The future proposals to change sheltered housing to general needs.
- The proposals to introduce a new service model.
- The re-introduction of service charges.

5.2 The consultation process to be adopted will be based on the Thurrock Community Engagement tool kit. In describing who to consult, the tool kit comments that some barriers to older people's participation are:

- Negative attitudes to older people
- Organisational inflexibility to take undertake involvement in away and at a pace, that suits older people
- Use of jargon and acronyms

In addition to the Community Engagement tool kit, the guidance entitled 'Effective Resident Involvement and Consultation in Sheltered Housing', published by the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), will also be referenced. The TPAS guide provides two particularly useful examples of case studies which resonate with the proposed changes in Thurrock.

The first case study relates to Mendip Housing and describes their proposal to change a traditional sheltered housing model to mobile working.

The second case study relates to Derwentside Home and describes their options appraisal process during the change for the future use of 8 sheltered housing schemes.

### **Case Study one: Mendip Housing: Working with residents to change a service**

- 5.3 Mendip Housing is a registered social landlord based in mid-Somerset. It provides housing and support to residents living in 21 schemes.
- 5.4 In early 2008, Mendip Housing began its work to involve residents in proposals to transform the traditional sheltered housing model to a new range of floating support services. This was triggered by a concern that spending resources on residents with no support needs living in sheltered homes was wasteful, and potentially deprived others in the wider community of support they might need.
- 5.5 Consultation with residents began with the Residents Forum. It quickly became clear that Mendip Housing needed to explain why it believed sheltered housing should change. Residents agreed that current arrangements were unfair but, whilst they could see the benefits of a person-centred approach, they were fearful of what the changes might mean for those already receiving support. Mendip's first step was to record the views of residents and staff on a DVD, which was then shared and viewed as required.
- 5.6 This DVD helped to air different points of view. There was support for the logic behind the move away from residential wardens to seeing each scheme as a 'hub' with wider community use; but residents were concerned that, by developing schemes into being a wider community resource, the 'community spirit' in each scheme would be lost.
- 5.7 During 2008, Mendip Housing increased the range and number of activities that brought residents together. Examples included an inter-Scheme Olympics and monthly activities open to all, such as painting, dominoes and darts, knitting, crafts and quizzes. Regularly bringing residents and staff together meant confidence and trust were built up. Residents began to express a new view that the proposed changes would be beneficial, both to them and the wider community.
- 5.8 In December 2008, Mendip Housing made and issued a second DVD, focusing on making the new changes work and exploring how residents would influence the new service over time. Residents began to work with the Support Services Project Team to establish the new approach. They agreed new job descriptions and prepared information about the changes and new services for other residents. A new resident's handbook was developed.

### **Outcomes – Empowerment and Other Benefits**

- 5.9 The main outcome was the empowerment that arose from residents being involved at the beginning, and being able to influence and shape the service as it was being developed. As a result of the changes:

- The new person-centred service is more focused on the needs of vulnerable residents both within the scheme and the wider community
- There is a new link with younger people and learning disability services
- More older and disabled people have been able to access support services and overcome isolation.

#### Benefits for Residents

- Staff no longer 'living-in' is seen as promoting greater independence
- Services are tailored to individual residents' needs
- Greater emphasis on referring people to other appropriate agencies
- Residents can access a wider range of services and support on top of those activities that existed prior to the changes
- There is far more contact with people who live outside the scheme.

#### Other Benefits

- The former resident wardens have been able to make a clear distinction between their home and work lives
- Staff are now part of a wider team working around supported housing
- The accommodation formerly used by wardens has been re-developed for younger people with learning disability challenges
- The move to using schemes as 'hubs' benefits the wider community, more of whom now receive Mendip Housing's support services.

### **Case study two - Derwentside Homes: Reviewing Sheltered Housing**

- 5.10 Derwentside Homes is the main social housing provider in the District of Derwentside, Co Durham. It was set up in December 2006 following residents' decision to transfer the housing stock from Derwentside District Council.
- 5.11 In January 2007, Derwentside Homes commissioned a report by resident participation experts TPAS to appraise the options available for the future of its eight units of accommodation providing independent living for the over 55s (formerly known as sheltered courts). The average age of residents moving in during 2005 -2006 was 76 years old, compared to the average over the previous decade of 72. Derwentside Homes wanted to look at five options:
1. Remodelling
  2. Extending
  3. Demolition and Rebuilding
  4. Changing Client Groups
  5. Joint Working with Care Providers and Social Services.
- 5.12 The TPAS report made clear that any proposal needed the full, effective and meaningful involvement of current residents for outcomes to be successful. Derwentside drew up detailed plans following an in-depth consultation period with residents. Residents were asked their views on how the £5million budget



should be spent, which included getting the right balance between improving existing communal areas and developing new facilities.

- 5.13 As a result of the consultation with residents, two units are being transformed from bedsit-style accommodation into one and two bedroom flats. Five other schemes are also being refurbished through a programme of works including upgrades to communal areas and individual flats.
- 5.14 The schemes will also be updated to reflect current lifestyles and promote independent living for those aged 55 and older. This includes the provision of a wet room, and a multi-functional room used by an on-site hairdresser or chiropodist, and a state-of-the-art IT suite.
- 5.15 One scheme - Delight Court in Dipton – now has a new computer room, conservatory, improved disabled facilities, and a larger laundry room and enhanced shower facilities. One of Derwentside’s long standing residents, Sylvia Pickard, said:
- 5.16 “Everyone’s been so impressed with the improvements. I am a former secretary, and like to use the computers to type letters. One of the residents who has family in Germany and Canada uses the computer to stay in touch with her relatives.”

### **Outcomes - Empowerment and Other Benefits**

- 5.17 The main area of empowerment arose through involving residents in decision-making over the allocation of the £5million budget:
- The developments improved the overall quality of accommodation and offer greater well-being to residents through better facilities
  - Disabled access and facilities were significantly improved.

#### Benefits for Residents

- They appreciated influencing what happened to their scheme and home
- Residents felt the best option was chosen and implemented.

#### Other Benefits

- Derwentside Homes addressed its Decent Homes challenges across all eight schemes
- The schemes are better places to live - making them easier to let, manage and maintain.

### **Learning for Thurrock**

- 5.18 One of the key messages from providers was the importance of involving tenants in the decision making process. The case study examples provided by TPAS supports this view, and describes how the process had empowered tenants.

The methods adopted for consultation included:

- written correspondence
- individual one to one interviews
- focus group meetings
- Sheltered housing forums.

5.19 The providers made reference to the consultation being time intensive and in some cases they had allocated dedicated resources to the task. The need to inform tenants, members and stakeholders of the proposals, allowing sufficient time for comment and evaluation will be reflected in the development of the project plan.

## **6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

6.1 The outcomes of the proposed changes are intended to; maximise the use of housing stock through better utilisation of harder to let and less appropriate older person accommodation; broaden the housing support offer to older residents who live outside sheltered housing schemes whilst delivering a more consistent service to tenants and; ensuring fairness by charging only those that use the service in addition to covering the operating costs through increased revenue.

## **7. IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**  
Telephone and email: **01375 652010**  
[sclark@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:sclark@thurrock.gov.uk)

Should recommendation 1.3 be approved then, subject to consultation, there would be an increase in income to the HRA that will be dependent on the level of charges.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Maria Oshunrinade**  
Telephone and email: **0208 724 8461**  
[Maria.Oshunrinade@BDTLegal.org.uk](mailto:Maria.Oshunrinade@BDTLegal.org.uk)

There are no legal implications other than those arising from the Report Legal Advice should be sought before embarking on renewal of the Tenancy Agreements.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**  
Telephone and email: **01375 652186**  
[nwarren@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:nwarren@thurrock.gov.uk)

The proposals seek to address an imbalance in appropriate housing for the wider population seeking social housing. The consultation proposed by the report provides opportunity to consider the impact on equalities as a result of the changes in use of sheltered housing property, as well as introducing a charge to sheltered housing tenants. The change further provides an opportunity to strengthen the links between communities and sheltered housing tenants with a view to improved cohesion and independent living.

### 7.4 **Other implications (where significant)**

- None

**BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):**

- None

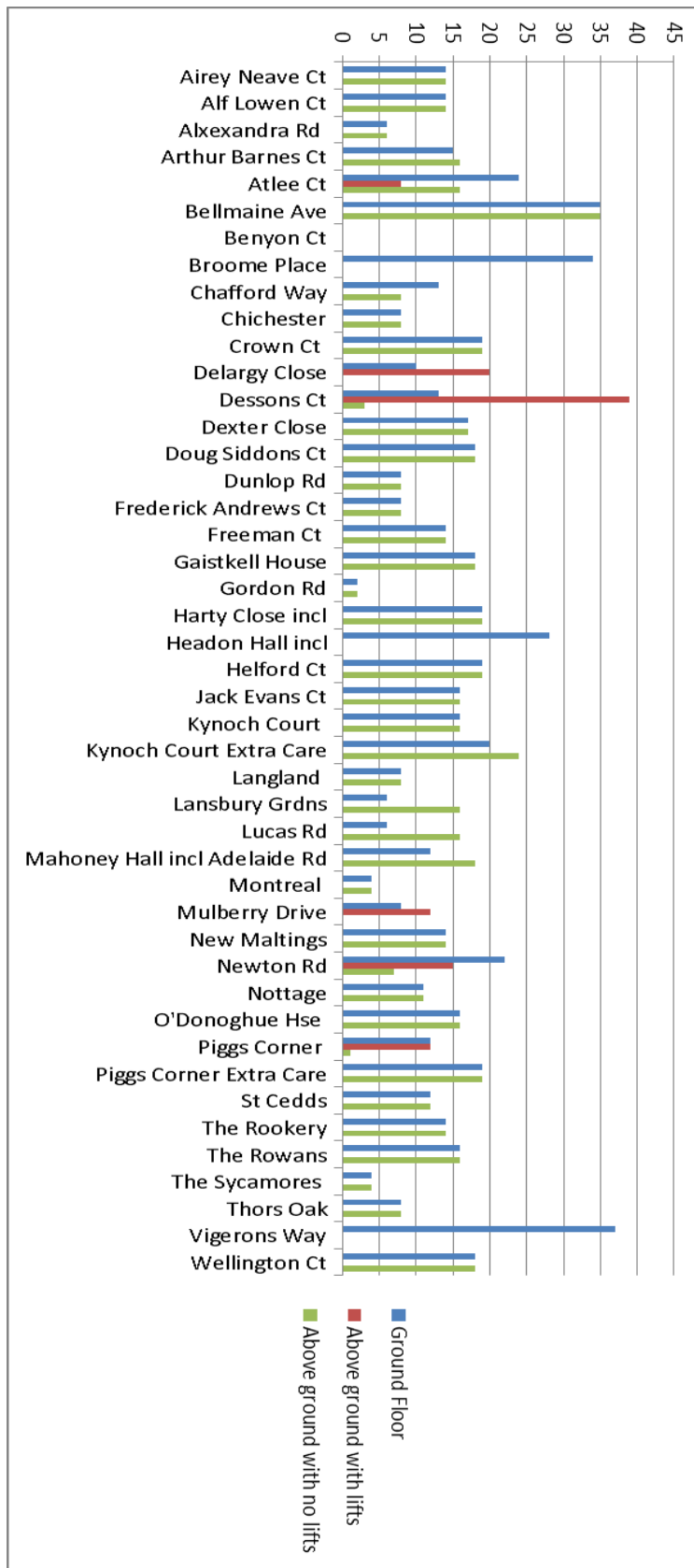
**APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

- Appendix 1: Distribution of sheltered properties with and without lifts.
- Appendix 2: Benchmark participants.

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Appendix 1: Distribution of sheltered properties with and without lifts.



**Appendix 2: Benchmark participants.**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Service provider</b>
Barking & Dagenham	Local Authority
Basildon	Local Authority
Braintree District Council	Greenfields HA, stock transfer
Brentwood	Local Authority
Castlepoint	Local Authority
Chelmsford	CHELMA, stock transfer
Colchester	Colchester Borough Homes, ALMO
Epping Forest	Local Authority
Harlow	Local Authority
Maldon	Moat HA
Rochford	Sanctuary
Southend Unitary Authority	South Essex Homes ALMO
Tendring	Local Authority
Uttlesford	Local Authority