

Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish

## Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm on 16 July 2014 Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL.**

### Membership:

Councillors Gerard Rice (Chair), Barry Johnson (Vice-Chair), Chris Baker, Clare Baldwin, Sue Gray and Susan Little

Gemma Riddles, Housing Tenant Representative

### Substitutes:

Councillors Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly and Susan Shinnick

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### Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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<b>1 Apologies for Absence</b>	
<b>2 Minutes</b>	<b>5 - 13</b>
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 2 April 2014.	
<b>3 Urgent Items</b>	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972	
<b>4 Declaration of Interests</b>	

Members are reminded that they should declare any interests as appropriate and in accordance with the adopted Code of Conduct.

Members are also reminded to declare existence and nature of Political Party Whip, as set out in Chapter 4, Part 3, Paragraph 12 of the constitution.

<b>5</b>	<b>Budget Update and Savings Proposal</b>	<b>14 - 33</b>
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Agenda published on: **8 July 2014**

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# DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

## Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

## When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

**What is a Non-Pecuniary interest?** – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

### Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;
- Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and
- leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

### Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

**Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish**

To achieve our vision, we have identified five strategic priorities:

**1. Create a great place for learning and opportunity**

- Ensure that every place of learning is rated “Good” or better
- Raise levels of aspirations and attainment so that local residents can take advantage of job opportunities in the local area
- Support families to give children the best possible start in life

**2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity**

- Provide the infrastructure to promote and sustain growth and prosperity
- Support local businesses and develop the skilled workforce they will require
- Work with communities to regenerate Thurrock’s physical environment

**3. Build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities**

- Create safer welcoming communities who value diversity and respect cultural heritage
- Involve communities in shaping where they live and their quality of life
- Reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and safeguard the vulnerable

**4. Improve health and well-being**

- Ensure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being
- Empower communities to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing

**5. Protect and promote our clean and green environment**

- Enhance access to Thurrock’s river frontage, cultural assets and leisure opportunities
- Promote Thurrock’s natural environment and biodiversity
- Ensure Thurrock’s streets and parks and open spaces are clean and well maintained

## MINUTES of the meeting of Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 April 2014 at 7:00pm

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**Present:** Councillors Steve Liddiard (Chair), Wendy Curtis, Oliver Gerrish, Tom Kelly (substitute for Sue Little) and Sue MacPherson.

**Apologies:** Councillor Sue Little

**In attendance:** K. Adedeji – Head of Housing, Investment and Development  
B. Brownlee – Director of Housing  
D. Moloney – Business Improvement Manager  
R. Parkin – Head of Housing  
S. Young – Senior Democratic Services Officer

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The Chair informed those present that the meeting was being recorded and that the recording would be made available on the Council's website.

### 27. MINUTES

The Minutes of Housing Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 30 January 2014, were approved as a correct record.

### 28. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

### 29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a) Interests

No interests were declared.

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

### 30. DEVELOPING RESIDENT KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Officers introduced the report which provided an update on the publication of residents led performance indicators and residents' satisfaction with housing services and neighbourhoods. An update was also provided on the Housing Directorates current and future appraisal of residents' satisfaction.

Members were informed that the housing department extensively surveyed residents' views and that these were run by an independent company called KWEST, which ensured an open and transparent process. It was felt that this provided confidence and consistency to the results of the survey. Officers explained that 20% of tenants had the opportunity to feedback their views and the service aimed to survey 500 residents each quarter.

The Committee were advised that there was not a sense of complacency in this area. Residents who were dissatisfied with the service received a call back from an officer, following which any remedial action was undertaken.

Councillor Gerrish welcomed the report and was interested to examine direct feedback from residents. He asked officers to provide further context in relation to national comparators and historical comparisons to determine whether the results were 'good.' It was further questioned whether there was a free text field for residents to include further comments so that their levels of satisfaction could be taken verbatim.

The Committee were informed that the last time Thurrock had undertaken a survey the results were lower than 60%. However it was anticipated that the national benchmark was approximately 70-73%. Officers acknowledged that although improvements had been made there was an ambition to make greater progress on improving the results and that a target to reach 75% general satisfaction rates had been set. It was felt that when more surveys would be conducted over time there would be greater opportunities for benchmarking and comparisons.

Officers assured Members that residents had the opportunity to provide free narrative during the survey.

Councillor MacPherson asked for reassurance that if a resident was unhappy with a particular operative, that the same operative would not return to the property to undertake any remedial work. Officers assured Members that if unhappy with a particular operative they would not return to the property, although another contractor from the same organisation would be required to complete the work.

Councillor MacPherson asked for clarification as to the numbers of people surveyed, as only percentages were provided within the report. It was clarified that one third of all residents who had received an update through the Transforming Homes programme had been surveyed, this equated to approximately 400 out of 1500 residents.

Councillor MacPherson was particularly concerned that the report was not written in plain English and that it was difficult to deduce trends because only percentage statistics were included.



Officers explained that a number of graphs and information had been supplied in order to demonstrate the improvement journey which had taken place.

The Committee requested that in future, reports should also include detail regarding total numbers as well as percentage statistics for each grouping, to which officers confirmed that this would be provided in further reports.

Members were informed that a good spread of residents from across the Transforming Homes programme had been surveyed, and that data was randomised by the independent company. However, it was the decision of the resident if they wished to complete the survey.

Councillor Gerrish asked whether problematic areas across the Borough could be identified through the survey results. Officers confirmed that small areas at street level had been highlighted as particular problem hotspots for levels of dissatisfaction. These levels of dissatisfaction were a result of similar complaints, for example window replacements, second bathroom upgrades. Following the identification of these areas of common complaint, officers had worked hard to inform the residents' of the details of the Transforming Homes programme and when they could expect this work to be completed.

Councillor W. Curtis commented whether damp and mould remedial work should be conducted and completed before installation of new kitchens and bathrooms under the Transforming Homes programme.

Officers informed the Committee that specialist surveys were undertaken before Transforming Homes updates began, and if damp and mould was a contained issue then further updates, such as kitchens, would be installed whilst the damp and mould problem was being managed. The time frame for the Transforming Homes programme was clarified in that internal works were carried out first which were then followed by external repairs. It was further noted that replacement windows were categorised as an external repair.

Councillor Liddiard welcomed the report which was a good news story for Thurrock, and was pleased that it was resident led. He echoed comments that the sample size should be included within the report.

Councillor Kelly questioned what support was being offered to residents in light of the fact that 12% of those surveyed experienced difficulties in completing the online application, and a further 7% reported that they found the bidding process difficult.

In response officers confirmed that support was available at community hubs and an assisted bidding process was offered to those who needed extra help. It was recognised that the process was evolving but officers were keen to provide appropriate support to assist residents.

Councillor Kelly referenced the report which outlined that English lessons were offered to site-operatives in order to improve their communication skills. He specifically asked whether this was of concern to officers and if this impacted on the level of service offered to residents.

In response officers highlighted the following key points:

- That the nationality of the workforce who was employed on the Transforming Homes Programme could not be dictated.
- That there was a layer of management and tenant engagement who were responsible for effectively communicating with tenants.
- That the contact numbers of the appropriate people for tenants to speak to was clearly advertised on project boards.
- That a balance needed to be achieved between the operative and management layer.
- It was remarked that the majority of tenants prioritised the following three aspects of an operatives job, and that these were often achieved and delivered by operatives for whom English was not their first language:
  - Whether the contractor arrived on time, was polite and kept to the scheduled appointment.
  - If their home was treated with respect, and if the contractor did not create a mess.
  - That they were happy with the quality of work undertaken.

Councillor MacPherson questioned whether the talent of the workforce could be used to Thurrock's advantage, and if residents could request an operative with specific language skills or a female only team. In response it was confirmed that contractors were appointed on quality and cost, however in future this could be included within a contract, if Members wished, so that tenants could request a female operative.

Councillor Liddiard commended the work of the Transforming Homes programme liaison staff and requested that the contact details of the team be shared with Members so that enquiries could be effectively handled.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Committee note the contents of the report.**

**31. VOIDS PROGRESS**

Officers introduced the report, which provided an update on the progress and management of void properties. Members were informed

that there had been an increase in the number of voids, which was a result of the change in allocations policy and due to the downsizing initiative to support tenants so that they would not be impacted by Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC).

Officers apologised that there was a mistake in the calculation of the numbers in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4, and reported that 1004 properties had been refurbished in the 2013-14 financial year. There had also been a vast increase in the numbers of properties that had been re-let.

Officers remarked that it was expected that of the 1007 properties re-let in the current financial year 622 had been improved to the Transforming Homes standard and 385 improved to a new minimum standard.

Members asked for clarification as to when the void period started and ended, to which officers explained that a void period started when the tenancy formally terminated, not the date that the tenant vacated the property. Tenants were still liable to pay the rent up until the date when their formal tenancy agreement ended. Similarly, the void period ended once the new tenancy started which could be different to the day the new tenant moved into the property.

Officers assured Members that that the new tenancy agreement did not start until the property was ready to move into, once the required repairs were complete. It was explained that officers liaised with the new tenant to ensure the property met the required standards and the new tenant was satisfied. However, officers recognised that there had been a very small number of instances during the year where the property had been transferred to a new tenant in an unsatisfactory condition. In these few instances officers had worked with the tenants in order to bring the property up to the required standard and negotiated the rent as necessary.

Councillor MacPherson commented that if the average loss of rental income per void property was around £1000 whether this resulted in a loss to the Housing Revenue Account of £1 million.

Officers clarified that this was not a loss to the Housing Revenue Account as it would not have been predicted that these funds would be collected, however it was recognised that this did generate a loss of income.

It was reported that this loss was being mitigated by turning around void properties faster, and that on average properties were available for re-let in approximately 6 weeks. It was noted that this compared to some local authorities across the country, some of whom turned their void properties around in 4 weeks. This had been a strong improvement from Thurrock's starting position, but it was expected that

there would always be a degree of voids loss as it was inevitable that some tenants would wish to transfer or vacate a property.

The Committee were advised that an inspection would be conducted once the tenant had given notice to vacate the property and that transfers would not be permitted if the tenant had caused damage. It was noted that abandoned properties were an issue in Thurrock and not every tenant gave notice to leave.

Councillor W. Curtis asked whether the Estate Officer had the final decision for permitting transfers to go ahead, and cited an example where a resident had not been allowed a transfer due to dirty paintwork. Officers remarked that general wear and tear was not a reason why a transfer would be prevented, but agreed to investigate this particular case outside of the meeting.

Councillor Kelly questioned what was being done to reduce long term voids. In response, it was clarified that the Housing Directorate had a list of properties that were long term void and which had structural concerns. Officers were examining the cost of rectifying these issues, for example by structural underpinning, in order to determine whether the works were financially viable. If not financially viable then all options were examined as to the disposal or alternative use for the property.

Councillor Liddiard questioned whether Thurrock allowed a greater percentage of transfers than other local authorities. Officers were unsure of where Thurrock was positioned in relation to local comparators, but remarked that the level of transfers was likely to be similar due to the Localism Act and residency criteria.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Committee note the contents of the report.**

**32. REVIEW OF HOUSING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

Officers introduced the report which set out the work that had been undertaken by the Housing Directorate in relation to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). Officers circulated a draft of the Thurrock Council Housing Safer Communities Strategy and a copy of action plan objectives to Members for review and comments.

It was agreed that the recommendations contained within the report be amended to note the item, which would allow Members to provide feedback on the Strategy.

It was recognised that Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) was a priority for residents, alongside repairs and caretaking. As a result the strategy had been developed, and officers highlighted the following key points:

- That core investigation and intervention was essential.
- That the Anti-Social Behaviour team and the Tenancy Management Team worked together to tackle the issues.
- The key to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour was having witnesses, which is why victim and witness support was vital.
- Preventative actions included, amongst other initiatives:
  - Acceptable Behaviour Contracts
  - Parenting Contracts
  - Family Intervention Project
  - Eviction and Forfeiture of Lease
  - Suspending Right to Buy Claims
- That the team were committed to safeguarding the victims of violence and child sexual exploitation.
- That £5,000 had been budgeted to establish visible patrols out of hours, which included tenant officers and Essex Police.

Officers also highlighted the fact that there was expected to be a change in the legislation in order to provide more powers to Local Authorities to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour. This was as a result of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Members welcomed the work that had been undertaken in attempt to tackle the problem of Anti-Social Behaviour in Thurrock, but questioned what was being done to encourage residents to report crimes to Essex Police.

Officers emphasised that this was a challenge, but it was hoped that the victim support strategy and introduction of visible patrols would provide confidence to residents to report Anti-Social Behaviour.

The Committee were advised that the role of the Housing Estate Officer would not change, but that they would assist the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer in collecting victim and witness statements depending on the nature and severity of the incident. It was observed that all officers would be trained in the same manner to ensure consistency of approach.

Members were informed that there were 4 officers in the Anti-Social Behaviour team and a further 19 officers in the Estate Team who also assisted with Anti-Social Behaviour enquiries.

Councillor MacPherson felt that the Environmental Action Team days which had taken place in the past had been successful and asked whether there were any plans for any such similar events. In response it was outlined that the Housing team worked alongside the Community Safety Partnership to take a multi-agency approach and that anti-social behaviour was discussed at local action groups.

Members were advised that a joint patrol with council officers and Essex Police had taken place on Bonfire Night and Fireworks night.

The Committee were informed that there would be a mixture of unannounced and publicised patrols in target hotspot areas and this flexible approach was welcomed by Members.

Councillor Liddiard remarked that he was pleased that new tenancy agreements were being introduced, and that work to safeguard women and children against violence and sexual exploitation was being undertaken.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Committee note the contents of the report.**

**33. 12/13 RECHARGING TENANTS AUDIT**

Officers introduced the report which provided an overview of the background to the 12/13 re-charging tenants audit and the actions that had since been implemented. Officers explained that the work had been commended by the Standards and Audit Committee and the report had been referred to Housing Overview and Scrutiny for review.

It was observed that the Housing Directorate could now re-charge for damage caused by tenants and it was reported that so far this had generated an income of £17,000, £7,000 of which was subject to a payment plan.

Officers recognised the need to be flexible in relation to vulnerable tenants but felt that there was now a clear and strong advice structure in place so that tenants took increased responsibility for the property which they resided in.

Due to the actions that had been implemented, officers expected that if re-audited the outcome would be 'green' and therefore requested that a further audit be undertaken.

The Committee agreed that another re-audit should take place, and requested that the outcome be reported back to the Committee in the next municipal year.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Committee:**

- 1. Agree that a re-audit takes place during 2014-15 and the results be reported back to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
- 2. That the contents of the report be noted.**

## **34. WORK PROGRAMME**

Officers informed the Committee that a report on garages was to be received during the next municipal year and noted that the outcome of the internal re-charging tenants audit should also be reviewed following discussions at the meeting.

In addition the Committee requested that the following items be included on the work programme:

- An update on the Right to Buy Programme.
- Information regarding Homeless Applications.
- Private Landlords and Tenants.
- Gloriana – a progress report on the house building programme.
- Sheltered Housing Accommodation Charges.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the Committee:**

- 1. Agree that the items as outlined above be included on the work programme for the following municipal year.**
- 2. Agree the work programme be noted.**

**The meeting finished at 8.25pm**

Approved as a true and correct record.

**CHAIRMAN**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Stephanie Young, telephone (01375) 652831  
or alternatively e-mail [syoung@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:syoung@thurrock.gov.uk)**

## Appendix 1

### Efficiency Savings 2015/16 - Management Actions

Savings Proposal	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Housing Services				
Joint management of Homeless team with Strategic Lead for Housing		30		
Reduced use of external Temp Accommodation		40		
Increase use of furnished lets		40		
<b>Total for Directorate</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>



<b>16 July 2014</b>	<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>Housing Overview and Scrutiny</b>	
<b>Budget Update and Savings Proposals</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> No
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Lyn Worrall, Portfolio holder for Housing	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy & Communications; Sean Clark, Head of Corporate Finance; Richard Parkin, Head of Housing Development Strategy & Needs	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Graham Farrant, Chief Executive; Barbara Brownlee; Director of Housing	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## Executive Summary

As a result of significant reductions in the money received from the Government and other pressures on services the Council will have to make £37.7m of savings over the three years between 2015/16-2017/18.

Cabinet received two reports in July 2014 (2013/14 Draft Outturn and MTFS Update; Shaping the Council 2015/16 and Beyond), setting out unprecedented reductions in funding requiring a change in the way the Council approaches addressing the budget gap and in considering the future shape of the organisation going forward.

This report sets out the overall context and principles upon which the MTFS is based and therefore the backdrop to developing savings proposals to address the budget gap.

A number of savings proposals were agreed by Cabinet for further development and public consultation. This committee is asked to consider the savings proposals for Housing Services and comment on them as part of the consultation process and to inform further development and decision making.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**1.1 That Members note the savings proposals within Housing Services set out in Appendix 1**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 As a result of significant reductions in the money received from the Government and other pressures on services the Council will have to make a further £37.7m of savings over the three years between 2015/16-2017/18. This is on top of the significant savings already made.
- 2.2 The Council has faced unprecedented financial pressures over the last four years. Over this period, the Council has exercised sound financial management within all services with the following headlines previously reported:
- Savings of £50m have been identified over the last four years;
  - The audit of the financial statements has confirmed that the Council, despite further in-year pressures, has contained expenditure within budget for the three financial years 2010/11 through to 2012/13;
  - The General Fund balance has been increased from £2.1 as at 31 March 2010 and maintained at £8.0m;
  - The Council has, for the last two audited years, received an unqualified Value for Money opinion;
  - The draft outturn for 2013/14, as reported to Cabinet in July, shows for the fourth consecutive year the Council has contained the financial pressures and delivered within the budget constraints.
- 2.3 The Leadership Group has been working over recent months to refresh the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) through reviewing the 2013/14 outturn and reflecting the latest information and forecasts within services. These have:
- Highlighted some 2014/15 pressures – Cabinet have endorsed the management actions being taken including for 2015/16 and beyond;
  - Identified the need to change the approach for budgeting and accounting for transformation and procurement savings; and
  - Led to a revised MTFS budget deficit for the period 2014/15 through to 2017/18 of £37.7m.
- 2.4 Specific pressures for 2015/16 and beyond, in addition to the overall reduction in Government grant, are set out in the body of this report. In addition Thurrock has and will continue to experience significant demographic changes. The Census 2011 showed that the population increased to 157,705, up 14,000 (10%) since 2001, and is projected to rise from 159,500 in 2012 to 176,500 in 2022. This is a 10.6% increase and is significantly higher than forecast for England (7.2%) and the Eastern region (8.6%).
- 2.5 This report sets out the overall context and principles upon which the MTFS is based and therefore the backdrop to developing savings proposals to address the budget gap.

2.6 A number of savings proposals were agreed by Cabinet for further development and public consultation, where appropriate/necessary. This committee is asked to consider the savings proposals for Housing Services.

### 3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

#### Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 – 2017/18

3.1 The Council agreed a MTFFS at their meeting on 26 February 2014 based on the following key assumptions:

- i. That further grant reductions in central government support would reduce year on year throughout the life of the MTFFS in line with government fiscal announcements;
- ii. That there would be annual increases in the amount that the Council would receive through business rate growth and New Homes Bonus;
- iii. That there would be a 1.99% annual increase in council tax along with an increase of 400 properties per annum;
- iv. That there would be a 1% pay award for all staff with the exception of senior management as well as incremental progression where staff are not at the top of their grade;
- v. That inflation would be limited to the Serco and Waste Disposal contracts as well as a provision for utilities;
- vi. That the Council would start to fix its temporary debt from the end of 2014/15, phased over the life of the MTFFS;
- vii. That growth for services, including for demographic demand, be set at a minimal level; and
- viii. That savings agreed at the budget Council meeting on 27 February 2013 over the two year period be delivered.

3.2 Based on these assumptions, the reported budget deficits were as follows:

<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>Total</b>
£m	£m	£m	£m
15.8	11.7	9.4	36.9

3.3 Since the Council meeting, the following changes to the MTFFS have been made and so set the basis for future savings:

- Ongoing costs of New Ways of Working – With the level of savings to be achieved over the medium term and the changes that the Council will go through, it is the Head of Corporate Finance’s opinion that the approach should not be to budget for these centrally, but to recognise any related costs as a central expense that enables service transformation and to identify savings within the services (including central services such as legal and finance). The financial logic of transferring the responsibility to reduce cost to the services is to reduce the possibility of double counting and ensure that the ownership of savings requirements is clearer.

- NNDR Appeals – there are a number of appeals currently lodged with the Valuation Office by local businesses that, if successful, could be backdated as far back as 2005. In the past these would have been met by the government but, despite the fact that the main proportion of this falls into the period before business rate retention, any impact is now shared between the government and the Council. This line reflects the Collection Fund Deficit treatment but there will be an ongoing adverse impact on business rate income that is factored into the MTFS elsewhere; and
- Purfleet – as land is drawn down for the development there will be a net loss to the Council in terms of income offset by maintenance etc. no longer required. Once complete, the development will realise additional income through Council Tax, Business Rates and the New Homes Bonus.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
27 February 2014 Council Meeting	-	15.8	11.7	9.4	36.9
2014/15 Service Budget Changes	(0.2)				(0.2)
Ongoing Costs of New Ways of Working		0.5			0.5
NNDR Appeals		2.0	(1.0)	(1.0)	-
Purfleet			0.2	0.3	0.5
<b>Revised Budget Deficits</b>	<b>(0.2)</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>37.7</b>

3.4 The savings required to meet these deficits will be challenging and the Council does not have excess reserves to be able to fall back on should there be slippage in their delivery. As such, the approach is to bring forward £3.5m of the savings requirements that will serve three purposes:

- It will provide a cushion should some of the savings not be achieved fully in 2015/16;
- It will help manage any adverse outcomes on the assumptions made; and
- It will provide an opportunity to make a contribution into the Budget Management Reserve to provide further resilience to the Council's financial position.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Revised Budget Deficits	(0.2)	18.3	10.9	8.7	37.7
Adjustment	-	3.5	-	(3.5)	-
<b>Adjusted Budget Deficit</b>	<b>(0.2)</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>37.7</b>

3.5 The proposals to bridge these budget deficits are included in a report later on this agenda within the context of the Council's Vision and Priorities.

#### **Other Assumptions Excluded from MTFS Totals**

3.6 The main assumptions that have led to the totals above have been set out in this and previous reports. However, the following assumptions **have not** been included within these totals:

- i. The Care Act 2014 will increase the costs to the Council considerably through the new legal responsibilities that fall on the Council from April 2015 and the funding reforms / Dilnot changes from April 2016 (both the cap on individual contributions but mainly through the change to the capital threshold). A full report on these will be going to the Health and Well-Being Board and DB. The government has stated that these costs will be fully reimbursed but there remains a risk that this will not happen in which case a further report will need to come back to Cabinet on how these costs will be met;
- ii. There may be development surpluses through Gloriana Ltd – these have not been included at this time as there is a degree of uncertainty;
- iii. Limited provision for an increase in the demand for services has been included – careful monitoring of the impact of regeneration, welfare reform and general demographic pressures will be required, especially in Adults', Children's, Planning and Transportation, Environmental and Housing Services.
- iv. There will undoubtedly be a cost of severance from savings proposals and the Voluntary Redundancy scheme. A separate budget has not been set aside for this and so the first approach will be for the services to contain the costs within their services with any excess being met from the Budget Management Reserve.

### **Savings proposals 2014/15 – 2017/18**

- 3.7 In recent months Directors Board has been considering how to reshape services given the forecast financial position. This has been particularly challenging due to the scale of savings already achieved and the continuing growth of pressures on services, mainly due to the demographic changes as set out above. As part of this process during January and February all staff were invited to put forward their suggestions. Over 400 were received and have been considered by Directors Board, directorate management teams and at the executive boards, feeding into the proposals put forward to Members as part of this report.
- 3.8 Directorates have been able to identify both efficiency savings and more significant or innovative ideas as to where reductions in budgets can be made. Where possible alternative service delivery options have been considered to prevent considerable reductions in the level of service. Inevitably though there are some proposals where significant services would reduce or stop.
- 3.9 Initial savings ideas involving changes to services were shared with Cabinet members as part of Strategy Week in June 2014 in order to provide a policy steer. Cabinet agreed a number of the proposals in July 2014 for further development and public consultation including consideration by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny committees. These include some ideas that are particularly challenging, innovative and financially significant.

3.10 Appendix 1 lists the savings proposals for Housing Services, which were endorsed by Cabinet on 2 July 2014. Appendix 2 presents more detail and narrative around each of the savings proposals.

The position with the Housing Revenue Account is protected from this round of cuts but because of this we are looking at ways to use the strength of the HRA to assist with mitigation on cuts that other departments have to make.

- Supporting the health bus which takes tenants to both GP surgeries and Basildon Hospital
- Developing very supportive tenancy processes which will allow other Supporting People savings to be reduced.
- Using our own properties to bring back out of borough placements currently costing ASC a lot of money.
- Using our own properties for Children's Social care to carry out parental assessments
- Building HAPPI housing to reduce the need for care packages in the community

The savings being made in the housing department are in our work with private tenants and homeless people who are some of the most vulnerable people in the borough. Because of this we have been as imaginative as possible in where the cuts will fall within an already very small budget.

It is worth noting that the other important role for the Housing Department is to ensure we support the growth agenda in the borough. Every well designed, good quality new home we build results in more council tax being raised.

### **Remaining Budget Gap**

3.11 Despite the efficiencies and management action already agreed and proposals put forward, which total £26.6m across all services, this leaves an £11.1m shortfall against the budget gap in the MTFs of £37.7m over the three financial years. This assumes that all proposals are implemented. As set out above the Council does not have sufficient reserves to meet this gap or to replace any proposals that may not be agreed, fail to be implemented or if there is slippage in their delivery. Additional savings proposals will need to be developed particularly to address the £5.3m gap for 2015/16 (the net effect of 2014/15 and 2015/16 as below). Directors Board will develop these during July for consideration at a budget focused additional Cabinet meeting in August. This meeting will also focus on the cumulative impact of the reduction in budget and implementation of all the proposals on service delivery including our ability to meet statutory duties and the implications for staff.

3.12 These are summarised as follows:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adjusted Budget Deficit	(0.2)	21.8	10.9	5.2	37.7
Appendix 2 Savings (2014/15 savings already accounted for)	(0.1)	(9.3)	(4.4)	(2.8)	(16.6)
Appendix 3 Savings	(0.4)	(6.5)	(2.5)	(0.6)	(10.0)
Remaining Projected Deficits	(0.7)	6.0	4.0	1.8	11.1

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget. The reduction in funding to the Council is unprecedented at a time when demand on services is growing, requiring a fundamental change in the way the Council approaches addressing the budget gap and in considering the future shape of the Council going forward.

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

- 5.1 During Strategy Week, Directors Board, the Leader and Cabinet have been consulted on the key elements feeding into this report. Senior managers throughout the council have also been involved in identifying potential savings options and all staff have been widely consulted for additional ideas, which have also been considered.
- 5.2 Specific savings proposals will require detailed business cases and, where appropriate, be subject to public consultation including:
- Overview and Scrutiny committees to consider the proposals in July
  - Public consultation during the summer as required
  - Cross party Member and partner working group to consider all proposals
  - Budget focused additional Cabinet meeting in August covering specific issues including community hubs
  - Partner and supplier consultation on specific proposals as required
  - Consultation with staff including trade unions from July and August
- 5.3 The outcomes of the consultation will feed into the final proposals put forward for decision making at the earliest opportunity in September and October 2014 followed by implementation.
- 5.4 The consultation will be supported by a comprehensive communication plan for external engagement during the consultation and decision making process.
- 5.5 Internal consultation with staff on specific proposals particularly where there is a restructure will be in line with HR policy and guidelines.

#### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 The proposals set out in this report have wide ranging implications for the Council, the way it works and the services it provides. Some of these will improve the way the Council does business and the service provided to residents by making them more targeted and efficient, however the cumulative impact of such a significant reduction in budget and the implementation of savings proposals will change service delivery levels, our ability to meet statutory requirements and therefore impact on the community and staff. The potential impact of the savings proposals on the Council's ability to safeguard children and adults will be kept carefully under review and mitigating actions taken where required.
- 6.2 The Council has commenced a voluntary redundancy process with staff. The outcomes from the process and full impact of the savings proposals on staff will be known over the next few months feeding into the implementation of management actions and decision making for savings proposals.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**  
**Head of Corporate Finance**

The financial implications are set out in the body of this report and appendices.

Council officers have a legal responsibility to ensure that the Council can contain spend within its available resources. This must also include a consideration of the risk in achieving that budget and so robust monitoring of accepted proposals will be essential throughout the coming years.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Fiona Taylor**  
**Head of Legal and Democratic Services**

There are no specific legal implications as a result of this report, however, any implications of specific savings proposals are set out in individual business cases to inform consultation and final decision making.

The Council's Section 151 Officer has a statutory requirement to set a balanced budget.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**



Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**  
**Community Development and Equalities**  
**Manager**

Each savings proposal with changes to the service requiring public consultation has a detailed business case setting out how the saving will be achieved including the level of service reduction and mitigating actions. As part of developing the business case a comprehensive Community and Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA) will be completed, informed by the public consultation. An assessment of the cumulative impact from all the CEIAs will be completed by the Community Development and Equalities team to inform final decision making on the savings to be made for 2015/16.

It is recognised that there is likely to be a cumulative impact on the voluntary and community sector due to proposals to both reduce core grants and specific grants currently provided by services across the Council. A full assessment will be completed in consultation with the CVS to determine the implications for the sector and impact on the wider community.

**7.4 Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Other significant implications are identified in each business case to inform the consultation process and final decision making.

**8. Background papers used in preparing the report**

- Budget savings proposals working papers
- Cabinet reports, July 2014: 2013/14 Draft Outturn and MTFS Update; Shaping the Council 2015/16 and Beyond

**9. Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Housing Services savings proposals for 2014/15 – 2017/18
- Appendix 2: Supporting People Savings Presentation

**Report Authors:**

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Sean Clark, Head of Corporate Finance, Chief Executive's Office

Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy & Communications, Chief Executive's Delivery Unit

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## Supporting People Savings - Housing Thurrock Council 2014

**Richard Parkin**  
**Thurrock Council**





**Service** : CWL

**Details:**

Private Sheltered Housing block with 30 units. Currently supporting people paying £15 per week for 12 tenants due to shortfall in rent. (£9,755 per year). No new agreements being made however so cost will naturally reduce over time.

**Rationale for termination:** Scheme not strategically relevant

**Housing Comments:**

Housing to pick this up from Housing General Fund. Potential that evictions will happen if shortfall not met and cost for homelessness will exceed £10,000 per year. More strategic conversation to take place between Housing and CWL.

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**Service** : Charles Street

**Details:**

29 units, including family units used for temporary accommodation whilst assessing homelessness applications. Currently run by Family Mosaic for £153,339 per year who also receive rental charge from the tenants.

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**Rationale for termination:**

Housing owned building providing homeless temporary accommodation for Housing services.

**Housing Comments:**

Housing to pick this up joint HRA and General Fund. HRA to pay for security, maintenance and cleaning of building. Rental income from temporary accommodation, of around £191k per year, to go to Housing General Fund and be used to provide some level of support for tenants of Charles Street.

Need to tie in with Children's Service who use the 5 family units.



## **Service** : Homeless Early Intervention

### **Details:**

Run by Family Mosaic working with 7 “hard to reach” families at a time looking to prevent Homelessness. Generally the many issues in the families however private rent arrears is the main risk to loosing home.

### **Rationale for termination:**

Service for prevention of homelessness.

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### **Housing Comments:**

HRA not able to pick up this service. However HRA currently paying for similar service for Council Tenants. Housing to tender both services out (Private and Tenants) to look at reducing price for both HRA and General Fund.



## **Service** : Single Homeless Floating Support Service

### **Details:**

Lined to last service. Floating support dealing with up to 47 single homeless at a time, including the use of 19 HRA flats to look at step down and get young people into tenancies in a supported manner. Cost of service £147k per year.

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### **Rationale for termination:**

Prevention of Homelessness Function

### **Housing Comments:**

Housing to pick this up joint HRA and General Fund. HRA to continue to provide flats. Children's Service to use flats as provision for transition for 17/8 year old. Income (£119,000) should already go to HRA and used for supporting tenancy sustainment services.

Additional 47 placements to be picked up through homelessness or Children's Services





## **Principle:**

Where additional any services are provided using Housing owned buildings then HRA can cover some of the service or additional rental income can go into Housing General fund to help continue some level of the service currently being provided.

Where service are in private owned buildings the HRA or Housing General Fund are not able to fund this.

Housing will look at ability to support / guarantee tenancies for 16 /17 year olds

## **Risk:**

Housing are concerned over the potential knock on affect of closing these schemes. On the face of it £1m of the £1.8m Supporting People fund has been used to “prevent homelessness”. However in comparison Housing General Fund has only c.£700k for preventing and addressing homelessness. There is a mismatch here which could cause a serious strain on the Housing General Fund.



## Possible Future Model:

17yrs and under – Children’s Services provide placements with the intention of Housing picking up at 18yrs under the Single Person Floating Support 19 HRA properties with support provided by HRA.

18yrs + – Low risk. Funded and assessed as usual through Housing General Fund utilising Clarence Road for temporary accommodation.

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18yrs + - High risk. Charles Street with income from properties providing floating support services to support users.

All homelessness prevention and assessment from 18 years and over to be completed by Housing and not in other parts of the Council, to gain economies of scale.

# Estimate of total effect on Housing Department

- Housing General Fund: £250,000 (zero cost)
  - CWL - £10k costs
  - Charles Street - £190k income to reinvest in service users
  - Single Homeless Floating support - £70k income to invest in tenancy sustainment
- Housing Revenue Account £120,000
  - Debt Advice Service £70k
  - Support for Charles Street repairs, security and cleaning £50k

**Appendix 6**

Hard to let properties - Properties advertised during 2013-14 for 3 times or more without successful bidders.

<b>Property address</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Weeks void</b>	<b>No. times advertised</b>	<b>Property type</b>	<b>Floor level</b>
19 Montreal Road	Tilbury	20	4	1 bed flat	1st floor
23 Montreal Road	Tilbury	37	16	1 bed flat	1st floor
49 Langland Close	Corringham	20	5	1 bed flat	2nd floor
61 Langland Close	Corringham	29	15	1 bed flat	2nd floor
404 Nottage Close	Corringham	16	9	1 bed flat	2nd floor
417 Nottage Close	Corringham	11	4	1 bed flat	2nd floor
415 Nottage Close	Corringham	12	4	1 bed flat	2nd floor
28 Fairfax Road	Tilbury	13	10	1 bed flat	1st floor
71 Alexandra Road	Tilbury	21	12	1 bed flat	1st floor
20 Broome Place	Aveley	9	5	1 bed flat	1st floor
27 Vigerons Way	Chadwell St Mary	5	6	1 bed flat	Ground floor

<b>16 July 2014</b>		<b>ITEM: 6</b>
<b>Housing Overview &amp; Scrutiny</b>		
<b>Sheltered housing Review</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Yes	
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Lyn Worrall, Portfolio Holder for Housing		
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Richard Parking, Head of Housing		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Barbara Brownlee, Director of Housing		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

## Executive Summary

At the November 2013 Housing Overview & Scrutiny committee, Members approved a report that reviewed the current sheltered housing provision and outlined options for consultation.

The review covered three issues:

1. The demand for sheltered housing stock
2. The current service model
3. How service charges could be applied

A further report in January 2014 approved a consultation methodology.

Subsequently a consultation with all current sheltered housing tenants and stakeholders was held between 3rd February and 31st March 2014.

This report outlines the results of the consultation and makes recommendations

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**1.1 Note the outcomes of the Sheltered Housing Consultation in section 5 of this report**

**1.2 Maintain the current policy whereby sheltered housing properties are not generally let to people aged less than 60 years.**

**1.3 Approve the decommissioning of some hard to let and/or unsuitable sheltered housing properties, as outlined in Appendix 7**

**1.4 Approve a new sheltered housing service model as outlined in Appendix 9**

**1.5 Approve an option for future funding of the sheltered housing service as outlined in section 3 of this report**

**1.6 Publish the Consultation outcomes on the consultation website and provide the outcomes in writing to tenants along with agreed recommendations**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

2.1 At the November 2013 Housing Overview & Scrutiny committee, Members approved a report that reviewed the current sheltered housing provision and outlined options for consultation.

2.2 The review covered three issues:

- The demand for sheltered housing stock
- The current service model
- How service charges could be applied

2.3 A consultation methodology was agreed and subsequently a consultation with all current sheltered housing tenants, tenants and stakeholders was held between 3rd February and 31st March 2014.

2.4 The consultation methodology and results are outlined in section 5

## **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

3.1 There are four options for funding the sheltered housing service:

- Option 1

Charge tenants for the service – costs would be around £8 per week per tenancy

- Option 2

Do not charge tenants for the service – the service cost (approximately £550,000 per annum) would need to be met by the HRA.

- Option 3

Charge tenants 50% of the charge – around £4 per week per tenant and fund the rest from the HRA (approximately £275,000 per annum)

- Option 4

Do not charge existing tenants for the service but introduce the full charges (£8 per week) to all new sheltered tenants – i.e. no charge to tenants who are transferring to alternative sheltered accommodation

- Over the past 5 years there have been 725 new lettings of sheltered housing, of which 56% were to new tenants i.e. not tenants transferring within the stock.
- Based on this trend 5.8% of the sheltered stock is estimated to change to a new tenant every year. Subsequently the service charge could be introduced to 5.8% of sheltered tenants every year.
- Based upon these figures the total stock would be relet in just over 17 years
- If option 4 were taken the cost to the HRA would be a total of £4.5 million over 18 years as follows:-

	<b>New Tenancies paying s/c (5.8%)</b>	<b>Cumulative Total Tenancies paying s/c</b>	<b>Remaining Tenancies not paying s/c</b>	<b>Cost to HRA for non-paying s/c £</b>
Year 0	0	0	1200	499,200
Year 1	70	70	1130	470,246
Year 2	70	139	1061	441,293
Year 3	70	209	991	412,339
Year 4	70	278	922	383,386
Year 5	70	348	852	354,432
Year 6	70	418	782	325,478
Year 7	70	487	713	296,525
Year 8	70	557	643	267,571
Year 9	70	626	574	238,618
Year 10	70	696	504	209,664
Year 11	70	766	434	180,710
Year 12	70	835	365	151,757
Year 13	70	905	295	122,803
Year 14	70	974	226	93,850
Year 15	70	1044	156	64,896
Year 16	70	1114	86	35,942
Year 17	70	1183	17	6,989
Year 18	17	1200	0	0
	1200			4,555,699

3.2 A comparison of cost for the 4 options is shown below:

<b>Cost to HRA</b>	<b>Average cost per year £</b>	<b>Total cost over 18 years £</b>
Option 1	0	0
Option 2	550,000	9,900,000
Option 3	275,000	4,950,000
Option 4	253,094	4,555,699

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

4.1 Recommendation 1.1 - an extensive consultation exercise was undertaken. It is important that members are aware of the consultation outcomes.

4.2. Recommendation 1.2 - there was almost unanimous agreement from the consultation that sheltered housing should not be offered to people under 60 except in exceptional circumstances e.g. for a disabled person. Officers recognise the strength of feeling around this area and have subsequently considered other options for dealing with hard to let properties.

4.3. Recommendation 1.3 – sheltered housing tenants recognised that some sheltered properties were hard to let and/or unsuitable for sheltered housing. Appendix 7 provides detailed reasons for this and makes recommendations for the decommissioning of some of these properties.

4.4. Recommendation 1.4 –the consultation highlighted inconsistencies in the service currently being delivered to tenants. This is mainly due to the inconsistent scheme sizes and the expectations of tenants and sheltered housing officers

It is clear that the current inconsistencies cannot continue and that we need to provide a more streamlined and consistent service, with mobile working sheltered housing officers. The current and improved service models are detailed in Appendix 9. The new improved service model represents savings in excess of £200k per annum to the HRA.

4.5 Recommendation 1.5 - sheltered housing tenants made it clear that they wished to retain a service but that they were unwilling to pay for the service. The service is currently funded by the HRA. Members need to determine an



option for the future funding of the service – the options are identified in section 3 of this report.

- 4.6. Recommendation 1.6 – it is important that tenants understand that their views are valued and have been taken into account when considering the future development of the sheltered housing service. Letters should be sent to tenants outlining the results of the consultation and the subsequent decisions of members following this report.

It is also important that the Council is transparent and honest in providing the outcomes of consultation and therefore the results should be published on the Council's consultation website.

## **5. Consultation**

### **5.1 Consultation Methodology**

- 5.1.1 The structure for the consultation process was informed by the Council's Community Engagement Toolkit. The toolkit describes older people as being seldom heard and suggests that a barrier to their participation is 'organisational inflexibility to undertake involvement in a way and at a pace that suits older people'.
- 5.1.2 Subsequently all sheltered housing tenants received a letter<sup>1</sup> outlining the consultation process with an invite to an event at their scheme or another of their choice. A list of all the consultation event dates was provided.
- 5.1.3 A questionnaire<sup>2</sup> was enclosed with the letter – tenants were invited to complete the questionnaire by hand and send it back to the Council in a pre-paid envelope. It was made clear that the questionnaire could be anonymous.
- 5.1.4 Individual events were held at every sheltered housing scheme. Three or more officers attended each event and the lead officer presented the three issues for review and gave tenants the opportunity to present their view in an open forum.
- 5.1.5 The events were well attended and tenants make good use of the opportunity to air their views on the proposals and other issues around sheltered housing. There were some heated discussions, particularly between tenants with differing views.
- 5.1.6 Attendees at the events had the opportunity to discuss the issues further with officers at the end of the meeting or to make separate appointments to do so at a later date. Many took up this opportunity.
- 5.1.7 The consultation highlighted the need to review and refresh residents meetings; tenants generally felt that they had not been given sufficient opportunity to voice their opinions in the past.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 – Letter to tenants

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2 – Questionnaire

- 5.1.8 An online survey, in the same format as the questionnaire, was made available on the Councils Consultation portal. This allowed relatives and friends of tenants, and any other interested parties to comment.
- 5.1.9 All sheltered housing tenants were contacted again by a sheltered housing officer a week before the consultation close date, and asked if they would like any assistance with completing the questionnaire and/or to speak with an officer about the issues. Stakeholders were invited to attend a briefing session on 19th March to discuss proposals. However, due to lack of take up the event was cancelled and instead interested parties were invited to attend the events at sheltered housing schemes and to feedback either at the events or via the consultation portal.
- 5.1.10 Adult social care officers were presented with a briefing paper outlining the proposals and invited to feedback via the Councils consultation portal.
- 5.1.11 Sheltered housing officers attended a Local Area Co-ordinators meeting to outline proposals and take feedback.
- 5.1.12 The Sheltered Housing Forum was informed of the proposals at their meeting and invited to feedback.
- 5.1.13 A briefing paper<sup>3</sup> was prepared and distributed to all members and an evening meeting convened on 20th February 2014 to enable discussion with officers. Three members attended the meeting.

5.2 At the consultation events, a number of key messages were relayed by officers to tenants:

- It is appropriate to consider some change of use as schemes become increasingly harder to let
- Tenants who are below 55 years should be considered for accommodation in sheltered schemes, provided the age criteria is set at 45 years and over
- The new sheltered housing model will create teams of sheltered housing officers to improve consistency in the delivery of service
- The new model will be flexible to allow the council to offer tenants choices in the type of services delivered
- The proposal to reintroduce service charges is to ensure that those who use and benefit from the service should directly make a financial contribution
- Tenants who currently qualify for housing benefit will be able to apply for assistance to meet their service charge costs

### 5.3 Results

- 5.3.1 5.3.1 467 completed questionnaires (34% of the 1386 posted out) were received and the responses collated into a report

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix 3 – Members Briefing – Sheltered Housing

5.3.2 594 tenants, out of a possible 1386 invitees (43%) attended the events at sheltered housing schemes. Officers transcribed comments and these were collated into a report.

5.3.3 Because consultees were able to remain anonymous it is impossible to determine the number of consultees who responded via both the questionnaire and the events.

#### 5.4 Key Findings 1 - the demand for sheltered housing stock

5.4.1 Consultees were asked whether or not they agreed with the proposal to let sheltered housing to people aged 45 years and above.

5.4.2 55% of questionnaire respondents disagreed with the proposal.

5.4.3 22% neither agreed or disagreed, or did not respond to the question

5.4.4 At the events there was almost universal disagreement with the proposal and some of the reasons given were:

- Lifestyles of younger tenants would be in conflict with older tenant
- Younger tenants were more likely to commit anti-social behaviour, have drug and alcohol issues and mental health problems
- Younger tenants could become pregnant or have young children and this would cause disruption within schemes
- Younger tenants are more likely to drive and this would increase issues with parking

5.4.5 Solutions put forward for dealing with hard to let properties included:

- Better advertising of the properties including making people more aware of what sheltered housing involves – unfortunately this solution does not address the reasons why some properties are hard to let i.e. lack of lifted accommodation above ground, no public transport, unsuitable physical location e.g. on a hill.
- Relaxing the allocations policy to allow more owner occupiers access to sheltered accommodation – currently there is a financial and local connection criteria that people must meet for any council allocation of housing
- Decommissioning or selling blocks – i.e. changing them into general use properties
- Installing lifts and improving the standard of the properties – this option is mostly impossible due to funding and practical restrictions

5.4.6 A recent project involving the use of ex-warden properties for people with learning disabilities met general approval and led some tenants to comment that similar sensitive lettings to those with disabilities would be acceptable.

## 5.5 Key findings 2 -The current service model

5.5.1 Consultees were asked to respond to a proposal to introduce mobile teams of sheltered housing officers rather than an individual officer per scheme.

5.5.2 37% of respondents to the questionnaire disagreed with this option whilst 35% agreed.

5.5.3 The events highlighted large inconsistencies in the service currently received by tenants.

5.5.4 Some tenants felt they received an excellent service but many expressed dissatisfaction; inconsistency in the provision of sheltered housing officers during holiday periods, sickness and training was highlighted many times.

5.5.5 Tenants from smaller schemes tended to be happier with their service and in particular the amount of officer time spent with tenants.

5.5.6 Tenants from larger schemes were more often dissatisfied with the service, complaining that the larger number of tenants impacted on the time available for individual tenants.

5.5.7 Officers explained to tenants that the inconsistency in service was not surprising given the large difference in numbers of properties at each scheme: the largest scheme has 72 properties whilst the smallest has only 24; however, both have a single sheltered housing officer.

5.5.8 46% of questionnaire respondents believed the proposal to introduce mobile working would affect the service they received and that it could be affected in the following ways:

- There would be a loss of security and continuity
- Tenants would have to wait longer for a response in an emergency situation
- Costs would be increased

5.5.9 60% of the questionnaire respondents identified extra services that they would like to see sheltered housing officers provide. These included:

- More social activities
- More contact with tenants
- More support with repairs

5.5.10 However, 47% of questionnaire respondents indicated that they would not be willing to pay an additional weekly charge for increased services. Only 29% indicated that they would.

5.5.11 At the events, the majority of tenants voiced their concerns that they would lose services by not having a specific sheltered housing officer at each scheme. The lost services identified, mirrored those identified within the questionnaires.

5.5.12 Overall, whilst tenants placed a high value on the services sheltered housing could provide, it is apparent that the current service is not clearly defined or delivered in a consistent manner and this hindered tenants in being able to support a future service charge.

## 5.6 Key findings 3 - How service charges could be applied

5.6.1. Consultees were asked to comment on the proposal to re-introduce service charges for the sheltered housing service.

5.6.2. Officers explained that currently the service charges were being met from general housing rent receipts and that this could not continue. Tenants benefitting from the service would ultimately need to pay for it.

5.6.3. 57% of questionnaire respondents disagreed with the proposal.

5.6.4. Descriptions of three service levels with estimated costs were provided and consultees were asked to indicate which service level they most agreed with.

5.6.5. At the events, there was almost unanimous disagreement with the reintroduction of a service charge but overwhelming agreement to keep a service

5.6.6. Reasons provided for not paying a service charge included:

- Tenants cannot afford extra cost – officers explained that those eligible for Housing Benefit would have this element covered
- Tenants claimed rents are already too high and made comparison with the same rent for a three bedroom house. All rents are determined by the rateable value of the property and because most sheltered housing is of a higher rateable value the rents are higher

- The service provided did not warrant the extra cost – lack of understanding of the service provision is addressed in key findings 2.
- Housing benefit recipients were not expected to meet the charges now but may have to in future
- It was the Council's fault that the service charge was removed and therefore tenants should not be penalised now.

5.6.7. It was clear from the consultation that sheltered housing tenants do want a service but they are not prepared to pay for a service that is inconsistent and undefined.

## 5.7 Sheltered Housing Forum

5.7.1 Consultation results and the recommendations listed in section 9 were discussed with the sheltered housing forum in June 2014.

5.7.2 Members of the forum had no recommendations.

## 6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 This report makes recommendations for the sheltered housing service that will improve the health and wellbeing of current sheltered housing tenants.

## 7. Implications

### 7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jo Beard**  
**Finance Officer**

- Decommissioning of sheltered properties – there is a potential cost to the HRA for home loss and disturbance payments up to a maximum of £1.5m over 5 years
- New service model – there are potential savings to HRA of £216k per annum
- Service charges – costs will depend on the option chosen for the future introduction of service charges as shown in section 3 – this ranges from no cost to £550k per year.

### 7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Alison Stuart**  
**Principal Solicitor**

- Charging tenants for services is a permitted term within the current tenancy agreements, (as recently amended via the varied tenancy agreements). However legal advice should be considered before implementation.

### 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**  
**Community Development and Equalities  
Manager**

- A full equality impact assessment based on the consultation will be completed before implementing any of the proposed changes'

### 7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- Recommendation for a new service model has implications for staff. The new model will reduce staffing levels from 29 to 16 sheltered housing officers.

### 8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Housing O & S Report – November 2013  
<http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/thurrock/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2315/Committee/401/Default.aspx>

### 9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1- letter to tenants
- Appendix 2 - Questionnaire
- Appendix 3 – Members Briefing
- Appendix 4 – Sheltered consultation – questionnaire outcomes
- Appendix 5 – Sheltered consultation events - outcomes
- Appendix 6 – hard to let properties
- Appendix 7 – decommissioning sheltered properties
- Appendix 8 – home loss and disturbance payments
- Appendix 9 – analysis of service offer

**Report Author:**

Dawn Shepherd  
Housing Strategy Manager  
Business Improvement, Housing



First Name/Surname

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

Postcode

DATE

Dear Title/First Name /Surname

### **Re Sheltered Housing Consultation**

The Housing department is about to start a consultation on its provision of sheltered housing.

The consultation will start on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014 and last until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014.

During that time we want to talk to all our sheltered housing tenants about proposed changes to the service. These include:

- The introduction of service charges
- Changes to the current service model
- Changing the use of sheltered schemes due to decreased demand

The attached questionnaire gives more details on the proposed changes.

We understand that you may have concerns and so we want to give you the opportunity to understand and discuss the proposals, and to feedback your views. This can be done in the following ways:

1. We will be holding meetings for tenants at the sheltered housing complexes to allow open forums for discussion. You can attend the forums at your own complex or a different scheme if you prefer.

Dates of all the meetings can be found on the enclosed sheet.

2. We have attached a questionnaire for you to complete and return to us. A housing officer or manager will attend the forum at your complex and you can return the questionnaire to that officer in the enclosed free post envelope.

Alternatively you can post the freepost envelope. There is no need to put a stamp on the envelope.

You do not have to give your details. However, if you would like someone to contact you to discuss the proposals further then you will need to provide these.

3. The consultation will also be available via the council's consultation portal at <https://consult.thurrock.gov.uk/portal/tc>

This will allow family, friends and other interested parties the opportunity to share their views.

If you have any queries regarding this letter, please speak with your sheltered housing officer who should be able to help you.

If your sheltered housing officer cannot help, she/he will be able to contact a manager who can answer your queries.

We look forward to seeing you at one of the forthcoming meetings.

Yours Sincerely

Sue Kane

Sheltered Housing Manager

## Sheltered Housing Consultation - Questionnaire

### Section A. Demand for Sheltered Housing

There are a number of sheltered housing schemes which are becoming harder to let, resulting in properties being left empty and a loss of rent.

To reverse this trend, we propose to let some sheltered properties to applicants who are 45 years and above, but in a sensitive manner.

A1. Do you agree with this proposed approach? (Please tick one box)

Yes – I agree		No – I do not agree		I neither agree or disagree	
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A2. What do you see as the **advantages** of letting sheltered property to applicants who are 45 years and over?

A3. What do you see as the **disadvantages** of letting sheltered property to applicants who are 45 years and over?

A4. What else do you think the Council could do to make sure that empty properties in sheltered schemes are let as quickly as possible?

--

A5. Are there any other options that the council should consider to address the challenge of empty properties?

--

## Section B. Sheltered Housing Officers

The sheltered housing schemes are currently managed by Sheltered Housing Officers, with one officer per scheme.

B1. How often do you speak to your Sheltered Housing Officer: (Please tick one box)

Daily	About once a week	About once a month	Rarely	Never

B2. Why did you choose to move into your sheltered housing scheme? (Please tick all boxes that apply)

Location to family or social network	Closeness to amenities e.g. shops, doctors	Sense of security and community feeling	Wanted to downsize	The facilities provided at the complex

Other Reason – Please Explain:

The Council proposes to improve the sheltered housing service by creating mobile teams of Sheltered Housing Officers who will be given new responsibilities for managing your scheme.

This will include managing the processes for empty properties, repairs and building maintenance, and for contracts such as cleaning. The sheltered Housing Officers do not currently do any of these things.

Working in teams, a Sheltered Housing Officer will visit each scheme on a daily basis, undertaking floor inspections and carrying out all statutory responsibilities such as fire, health & safety checks.

Morning calls and calling in on tenants who have asked for additional support will still be provided, but the Sheltered Housing Officer's time will not be spent at just one scheme throughout the day.

The Council believes that team working will create a more flexible service, allowing sheltered housing officers to offer tenants a wider range of services.

B3. Do you agree with this proposal? (Please tick one box)

Yes – I agree		No – I do not agree		I neither agree or disagree	
---------------	--	---------------------	--	-----------------------------	--

B4. What services do you currently use? (Please tick all boxes that apply)

Morning Call	I have a Support Plan	Monthly resident meetings	Social activities –e.g. Bingo, Lunches	None

B5. Do you believe the proposed change to the Sheltered Housing Officer's role will affect the services you currently receive?

No	
Yes	Please give details of how you think the service will be affected:

B6. Are there services currently not offered to you, that you would like to see the Sheltered Housing Officer provide?

No	
Yes	Please give details:

B7. If the Council were able to deliver the extra services you have described, would you be prepared to pay an additional weekly charge to meet the service costs: (Please tick one box)

I would be prepared to pay £1 to £2 extra per week	I would be prepared to pay £3 to £5 extra per week	I would be prepared to pay £6 to £10 extra per week	I would not be prepared to pay an additional charge for the service

### Section C. Service Charges

There is a cost associated with providing a Sheltered Housing Officer to deliver services to a scheme. The Council can recover this cost weekly through service charges; this charge is in addition to rent.

Currently, sheltered housing tenants do not pay for this service.

It is proposed that tenants living in sheltered schemes should pay a service charge for the services provided by the Sheltered Housing Officer.

C1. Do you agree with this proposal? (Please tick one of the boxes)

Yes – I agree		No – I do not agree		I neither agree or disagree	
---------------	--	---------------------	--	-----------------------------	--

If you disagree, please say why:

There are three levels of service being considered – described under the 3 options below.

The estimated service charge which would apply to each option is shown.

- Option 1

Sheltered Housing Officers would be responsible for the day to day management of the scheme and support tenants to live independently. This will provide the same level of service currently offered.

This service would operate Monday to Friday with an estimated service charge of £11.50 per week.

- Option 2

Sheltered Housing Officers work as teams, with responsibility for schemes as well as additional duties for the management of tenancies and contractor services. The management of sheltered housing through a team of Sheltered Housing Officers allows us to offer a more consistent service across the borough

This service would operate Monday to Friday with an estimated service charge of £9 per week.

- Option 3

This option reduces the number of Sheltered Housing Officers available to work at each scheme. There would be a reduced Sheltered Housing Officer presence at schemes throughout the week, and very limited scope to offer enhancements to the service.

This service would operate Monday to Friday with an estimated service charge of £5 per week.

C2. Please choose from the three options above, the one which you most agree with:

(Please tick one box)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3



C3. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about sheltered housing?

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#### Section D. Contact Information

If you would like to give us your details – please fill in the section below:

You do not have to provide this information to take part in the consultation but it will help us to contact you if we need more clarification.

Name:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Email:	
Age:	

Thank you for taking part in this consultation.

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## Members Briefing: Sheltered Housing Consultation February 2014

In November 2013, Housing Overview & Scrutiny approved a report reviewing the current sheltered housing provision and recommended that the Council consult with tenants on proposals.

A full consultation with current sheltered housing tenants, stakeholders and other interested parties, commenced on 3rd February 2014 and lasts until 31st March 2014.

Every sheltered housing tenant has been sent a letter and a questionnaire outlining what the consultation is about and detailing how they can take part. Further information regarding the consultation process can be found below.

### Summary of the Proposals for Consultation:

All proposals are subject to the outcome of the consultation process and this will be made very clear to tenants.

- Introducing a new model for sheltered housing

The new sheltered housing model will create teams of sheltered housing officers to improve consistency in the delivery of services.

The new model will be flexible to allow the council to offer tenants choices in the type of services delivered.

- Changing the use of sheltered housing due to decreased demand

It is appropriate to consider some change of use as schemes become increasingly harder to let.

Tenants who are below 55 years should be considered for accommodation in sheltered schemes, provided the age criteria is set at 45 years and over.

- Re-introducing a service charge

The proposal to reintroduce service charges is to ensure that those who use and benefit from the service should directly make a financial contribution.

Tenants who currently qualify for housing benefit will be able to apply for assistance to meet their service charge costs.

## The consultation process:

### • Current Sheltered Housing tenants:

The consultation process will be sensitive to the needs of sheltered housing tenants.

Subsequently, a meeting will be held in every sheltered housing complex over the next two months, and tenants can either attend the event at their own complex or at a different complex if they prefer. Dates of all events have been provided to tenants.

During the meeting, details of the recommendations and options will be explained to tenants and there will be an open forum for discussion.

Immediately following the meeting, tenants will be given an opportunity to talk with officers on a one to one basis or if they prefer, an appointment can be made for a later meeting.

The questionnaire, which outlines the proposals and options, has been sent to every sheltered housing tenant to complete. Assistance will be given to those tenants who need help in completing the questionnaire, but if preferred, tenants may give verbal feedback which will be recorded by officers.

### • Non-Sheltered housing tenants:

Stakeholders will be invited to a separate event and members of the public will be able to consult via the Council's consultation website portal at <https://consult.thurrock.gov.uk/portal/tc> where the questionnaire can be viewed and completed online. The questionnaire outlines proposals and possible options and will enable family members and friends of sheltered housing tenants to give their views.

### • Members

Members are invited to discuss the recommendations and options with senior officers at a briefing on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February from 6-7pm in Committee Room 1 at the Civic Offices.

## Attached

1. Copy of O & S report November 2013
2. Copy of letter sent to all sheltered housing tenants
3. Copy of Consultation Questionnaire
4. Sheltered Housing schemes meeting dates

## Sheltered Housing Consultation – Questionnaire Outcomes

Questionnaires were sent out to all 1386 sheltered housing tenants and of these, 467 were completed and returned. The results below show percentages of those 467 responses

### Section A. Demand for Sheltered Housing

There are a number of sheltered housing schemes which are becoming harder to let, resulting in properties being left empty and a loss of rent.

To reverse this trend, we propose to let some sheltered properties to applicants who are 45 years and above, but in a sensitive manner.

#### Question A1.

Do you agree with this proposed approach? (Please tick one box)

Yes – I agree	23%	No – I do not agree	55%	I neither agree or disagree	21%	No response	1%
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#### Question A2.

What do you see as the **advantages** of letting sheltered property to applicants who are 45 years and over?

The answers fell broadly into 10 categories

1. No comment or don't know
2. It provides a solution for lack of housing stock and/or long waiting lists for younger people
3. No advantage and/or disagree with the suggestion
4. Don't believe they cannot be let - need to address the issue of finding suitable people e.g. making online form more accessible
5. It would introduce younger people into schemes which are predominantly full of elderly people; younger people can help older people/takes away stigma of old people/younger could help with jobs/people feel more secure
6. It would provide access to supported housing for younger vulnerable or disabled people
7. It could work in some schemes depending on the layout
8. It would prevent rent loss for the Council and keep rents down
9. It would only work for older people i.e. over 50s / happy if sensitively let
10. It could release larger homes - younger people downsizing

**Question A3.**

What do you see as the **disadvantages** of letting sheltered property to applicants who are 45 years and over?

The answers fell broadly into 10 categories

1. No comment / no concerns
2. Concerns regarding noise and lifestyle of younger people
3. Problems with parking
4. Concerns regarding parking and noise
5. Concerns that younger people would have children living with them or visiting them
6. Sheltered schemes are designed only for old people / old & young people do not mix well
7. An older age group e.g. 50-60 would be more appropriate
8. The proposal would disadvantage older people - there would be less sheltered housing available for older people
9. The proposal would be acceptable provided people were vetted first for their suitability
10. Miscellaneous comments

**Question A4.** What else do you think the Council could do to make sure that empty properties in sheltered schemes are let as quickly as possible?

The answers fell broadly into 15 categories

1. Reduce rent / offer incentives to move
2. Advertise properties more effectively
3. Provide more assistance with applying & bidding
4. Relaxing the allocations policy
5. Better transport links /storage for mobility scooters
6. Encourage downsizing
7. Re-educate - sheltered housing is not residential care
8. Make better use of the facilities
9. Improved standards of property (repairs)
10. Speed up void / lettings process
11. Remove the requirement for support needs
12. Decommission or sell blocks that are hard to let
13. Changes to SHOs
14. Improve accessibility
15. Use hard to let flats for respite care

**Question A5.**

Are there any other options that the council should consider to address the challenge of empty properties?

The answers fell broadly into 16 categories

1. Reduce rent / offer incentives to move
2. Advertise properties more effectively
3. Provide more assistance with applying & bidding for properties
4. Relaxing the allocations policy to allow more people to qualify
5. Better transport links /storage for mobility scooters
6. Encourage downsizing
7. Re-educate - sheltered housing is not residential care
8. Make better use of the facilities
9. Improved standards of property (repairs)
10. Speed up void / lettings process
11. Remove the requirement for support needs
12. Decommission or sell blocks that are hard to let
13. Changes to SHOs
14. Improve accessibility
15. Use hard to let flats for respite care or people with Learning disabilities
16. Increase age requirement to 55 and above

**Section B. Sheltered Housing Officers**

The sheltered housing schemes are currently managed by Sheltered Housing Officers, with one officer per scheme.

**Of the 467 responses 445 (95%) already lived in sheltered accommodation**

**Question B1.**

How often do you speak to your Sheltered Housing Officer:

Daily	About once a week	About once a month	Rarely	Never	No response
58%	11%	8%	16%	5%	1%

**Question B2.**

Why did you choose to move into your sheltered housing scheme? (Please tick all boxes that apply)

Location to family or social network	Closeness to amenities e.g. shops, doctors	Sense of security and community feeling	Wanted to downsize	The facilities provided at the complex	Other
17%	16%	27%	10%	17%	13%

The Council proposes to improve the sheltered housing service by creating mobile teams of Sheltered Housing Officers who will be given new responsibilities for managing your scheme.

This will include managing the processes for empty properties, repairs and building maintenance, and for contracts such as cleaning. The sheltered Housing Officers do not currently do any of these things.

Working in teams, a Sheltered Housing Officer will visit each scheme on a daily basis, undertaking floor inspections and carrying out all statutory responsibilities such as fire, health & safety checks.

Morning calls and calling in on tenants who have asked for additional support will still be provided, but the Sheltered Housing Officer's time will not be spent at just one scheme throughout the day.

The Council believes that team working will create a more flexible service, allowing sheltered housing officers to offer tenants a wider range of services.

**Question B3.**

Do you agree with this proposal?

Yes – I agree	35%	No – I do not agree	37%	I neither agree or disagree	24%	No Response	4%
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**Question B4.**

What services do you currently use? (Please tick all boxes that apply)

Morning Call	I have a Support Plan	Monthly resident meetings	Social activities –e.g. Bingo, Lunches	None
60%	31%	41%	50%	19%

**Question B5.**

Do you believe the proposed change to the Sheltered Housing Officer’s role will affect the services you currently receive?

No	41%	Yes	46%	No Response	13%
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If yes- Please give details of how you think the service will be affected:

<p>The answers fell broadly into 7 categories</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Concerns that no SHO available during day means a loss of security &amp; continuity – tenants would not feel safe</li> <li>2. The service would be improved</li> <li>3. The service will be less personal</li> <li>4. Tenants would have to wait longer in an emergency or when they need to speak with the SHO</li> <li>5. Costs would be increased</li> <li>6. There would be a loss of entertainment / social activities</li> <li>7. SHOs will have too much to do and would waste time travelling</li> </ol>
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**Question B6.**

Are there services currently not offered to you, that you would like to see the Sheltered Housing Officer provide?

No	17%	Yes	60%	No Response	23%
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If yes – Please give details

The answers fell broadly into 10 categories

1. More information on available services
2. More social activities
3. More contact with SHOs
4. Weekend calls
5. A laundry service
6. Better cleaning of communal areas
7. Support with repairs
8. More support when the tenant is ill or in need
9. More security support
10. Help with IT skills

**Question B7.**

If the Council were able to deliver the extra services you have described, would you be prepared to pay an additional weekly charge to meet the service costs: (Please tick one box)

I would be prepared to pay £1 to £2 extra per week	I would be prepared to pay £3 to £5 extra per week	I would be prepared to pay £6 to £10 extra per week	I would not be prepared to pay an additional charge for the service	No Response
15%	9%	5%	47%	24%

**Section C. Service Charges**

There is a cost associated with providing a Sheltered Housing Officer to deliver services to a scheme. The Council can recover this cost weekly through service charges; this charge is in addition to rent.

Currently, sheltered housing tenants do not pay for this service.

It is proposed that tenants living in sheltered schemes should pay a service charge for the services provided by the Sheltered Housing Officer.

**Question C1.**

Do you agree with this proposal? (Please tick one of the boxes)

Yes – I agree	20%	No – I do not agree	57%	I neither agree or disagree	17%	No Response	5%
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If you disagree, please say why:

The answers fell broadly into 8 categories

1. Cannot afford extra cost
2. Don't require extra service
3. Rents are high enough –the charges should already be included
4. Not fair that those on HB do not pay
5. Service provided is not worth extra cost
6. Charges were removed so why should we pay now?
7. Pensioners should be subsidised by others
8. I disagree but would reluctantly pay

There are three levels of service being considered – described under the 3 options below.

The estimated service charge which would apply to each option is shown.

- Option 1

Sheltered Housing Officers would be responsible for the day to day management of the scheme and support tenants to live independently. This will provide the same level of service currently offered.

This service would operate Monday to Friday with an estimated service charge of £11.50 per week.

- Option 2

Sheltered Housing Officers work as teams, with responsibility for schemes as well as additional duties for the management of tenancies and contractor services. The management of sheltered housing through a team of Sheltered Housing Officers allows us to offer a more consistent service across the borough

This service would operate Monday to Friday with an estimated service charge of £9 per week.

- Option 3

This option reduces the number of Sheltered Housing Officers available to work at each scheme. There would be a reduced Sheltered Housing Officer presence at schemes throughout the week, and very limited scope to offer enhancements to the service.

This service would operate Monday to Friday with an estimated service charge of £5 per week.

**Question C2.**

Please choose from the three options above, the one which you most agree with: (Please tick one box)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	No Response
24%	10%	23%	43%

**Question C3.**

Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about sheltered housing?

The answers fell broadly into 14 categories

1. Happy with current status - do not want change
2. Do not want to pay more money
3. Don't agree with any options
4. Cannot afford to pay more money
5. Problems with repairs/cleaning / security so not willing to pay more
6. Put in lifts
7. Happy to pay / suggest introduce charges gradually
8. Allow priority to people needing to move downstairs in same block
9. Do not agree with mixing age groups
10. Issues with Services currently provided
11. Would reluctantly accept charge if it meant keeping their SHO
12. Current facilities not always available e.g. communal hall
13. Concerns that those on HB will not pay - why should those who pay full rent
14. Current service is not good enough

## Sheltered Housing Consultation Events – Outcomes

During February and March 2014, events were held at all 29 sheltered housing schemes within the borough and all residents were invited to attend either the event at their own scheme or an alternative event at a scheme of their choice.

594 tenants out of a possible 1386 invitees (43%) attended the events.

Chart 1 shows the breakdown by scheme.

At the events three areas were discussed:

1. The sensitive letting of sheltered properties to people aged 45 to 60 years
2. Mobile Sheltered Housing Officers (SHOs) working in teams to cover a number of schemes rather than an officer per scheme.
3. The re-introduction of service charge; options discussed for three levels of charge according to the level of service provided

Officers attended the events and recorded verbal feedback. They made themselves available to discuss concerns with tenants on a one to one basis following the meetings and also at pre-arranged appointments if required.

Tenant's expressions of their views differed but there were consistent themes (outcomes) which mirrored the findings of the questionnaires.

### Key Findings:

1. The sensitive letting of sheltered properties to people aged 45 to 60 years

There was general agreement that people aged 45 to 60 should not be accommodated in sheltered housing, although many thought that lowering the age limit to 55 year was a fair compromise. Reasons given for this fell broadly into the following categories:

- The lifestyles would be too different – younger tenants were likely to still work, would play louder music and stay up later, whilst older people wanted a quieter lifestyle
- Younger tenants could have children themselves, or visiting children, who could be disruptive
- Younger tenants were more likely to commit anti-social behaviour and/or have drug or alcohol issues
- Younger tenants were more likely to have mental health issues

- Younger tenants were more likely to have a car and there was insufficient parking which could lead to disagreement amongst tenants

A few tenants indicated that younger people may benefit from the support provided in sheltered accommodation but this was far from a universal view.

Some tenants would be more willing to accept younger residents who had been “vetted” to ensure they were suitable for the scheme i.e. they had similar lifestyles to the current tenants. A few could see that younger tenants would benefit the older tenants by offering them support e.g. by doing odd jobs, shopping for them etc.

But there was an overwhelming view that there was no benefit to current tenants at all and many felt worried and/or vulnerable that older and younger tenants could be mixed, citing their reasons for moving into sheltered accommodation as gaining more security. Many also indicated that family members gained comfort from know that their parents, aunt, uncle etc. were looked after in sheltered accommodation.

Subsequently, the view was frequently expressed that “hard to let” whole blocks should be de-regulated so that younger people could live together in those schemes leaving fewer sheltered schemes. Deregulated schemes should be those with no lifts and properties above the ground floor.

Another solution often proposed was to install lifts to properties above ground floor – either a through floor lift or stair lifts where appropriate.

A number of tenants praised the use of ex-warden accommodation for learning disability residents through Family Mosaic and suggested sensitive lettings to people with mild disabilities could be successful. However, there was concern that if too many properties were let outside of the current age criteria then there would be insufficient stock available for older people in the future.

2. Mobile sheltered housing officers (SHOs) working in teams to cover a number of schemes rather than an officer per scheme.

The vast majority of participants felt that losing a personal sheltered housing officer would be detrimental – reasons given fell into a number of clear categories:

- Tenants would lose many of their social activities, which are currently organised by the SHO
- Tenants would be left for long periods of time with no support, since the SHOs would be busy at other schemes – it was felt this would particularly affect smaller schemes

- A personal scheme officer gets to know tenants better and can offer a more personal service – this gave the perception of greater security and confidence. Many praised their SHOs and gave examples of support provided to them or other residents.

A few tenants indicated their support for a mobile service stating it could provide more professionalism, fewer clashes of personality between the SHO and tenant, and less “favouritism”. Speaking with someone each day, regardless of whether or not it was the same officer, was sufficient for some but these views represented a very small minority.

A recurring comment was that SHOs do not currently spend enough time with tenants due to training commitments and covering staff sickness at other schemes.

### 3. The re-introduction of service charges and options of three levels of charge according to the level of service provided

There was almost unanimous agreement against the introduction of any service charge and again, views fell clearly into a number of categories:

- Concerns that tenants would not be able to afford the extra cost
- Rents were perceived to be too high already, with much comparison made with three bedroom houses attracting a similar rent. Subsequently residents believed that they were already paying for the sheltered housing service within their rent.
- It was felt that the service currently offered was not of a high value and did not represent value for money
- There were very strong views about tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit who would not have to meet the extra cost. Many felt benefit recipients should not be able to comment since they would not be financially affected.
- Those currently in receipt of housing benefit were concerned that future benefit changes might leave them liable for the charges in future
- Many commented that it was the Council’s decision to remove the charge and “not their fault” so why should they have to pay now
- Although most people agreed that the service needed to be paid for, there appeared to be little concern that general needs tenants were currently meeting the support costs. There was an attitude that older tenants were entitled to receive such a benefit since they had worked and paid into the system for much of their lives

Residents were invited to comment on 3 levels of service and the estimated cost for each.

There was overwhelming agreement to keep the current service i.e. Option 1, but equally an overwhelming determination not to pay the associated cost. Subsequently whilst a few residents indicated that they would reluctantly pay for a service if it meant keeping their

current SHO, most residents would not commit to choosing a level of service they were willing to pay for.

A few commented that any service provided should be on a sliding scale and tenants should be able to opt in and out of differing levels, depending on their current circumstances and needs.

#### 4. General comments

Many participants took the opportunity to comment generally on services provided by the Council and again there were recurring themes:

- The closure of area housing offices made it more difficult to speak with a housing officer and to report repairs – tenants felt that the removal of a personal SHO would only add to the difficulty
- There were a large number of tenants who had used the Care line service in the evening or weekends, who complained that it took a long time to get through to someone. This was distressing when they had an emergency situation

Many participants also suggested ways to use the hard to let properties:

- Advertise more effectively – do not use the word “warden” as this can be off putting and stigmatises sheltered housing
- Change the lettings criteria to allow more owner occupiers to sell their properties and take Council accommodation, for which they would pay full rent
- Let them at reduced rents

Many could not comprehend that properties would be hard to let, since the schemes they occupy were popular and had no shortage of waiting residents, particularly the ground floor properties. This again led to wide agreement that hard to let blocks should be put back totally into general needs rather than mixing age groups.

Unfortunately there were a very high number of participants who stated

- Decisions have already been made
- The Council does not listen to residents
- The Council is blackmailing tenants by giving them only three choice of service charge
- They did not “sign up” for service charges or the potential changes to the service and therefore do not have to pay them



Chart 1

<b>Complex</b>		<b>No. of Residents Per Complex</b>	<b>No. Residents Attended</b>	<b>% attendance</b>
<b>Grays &amp; Stifford Clays</b>	Airey Neave	31	18	58%
	Atlee Court incl Lucas Road (14+7)	28	21	75%
	Dexter Close	53	16	30%
	Doug Siddons	37	24	65%
	Frederick Andrews	80	27	34%
	Harty Close incl Gaitskell	81	21	26%
	Headon Hall incl St cedds.	35	8	23%
	Chafford	17	7	41%
	Wellington	24	11	46%
	Piggs Corner	91	32	35%
<b>Tilbury &amp; Chadwell</b>	Alexandra Hall - Dunlop Road	43	17	40%
	Alf Lowne	34	19	56%
	Arthur Barnes Court	42	21	50%
	Crown Crt incl Montreal/Newton (12+4)	72	16	22%
	Delargy Close	36	16	44%
	Lansbury Gardens	48	27	56%
	Mahoney Hall/ Fairfax/Adelaide (10+5)	31	15	48%
	Vigerons	36	22	61%
<b>Corringham &amp;Stanford</b>	Bellamine incl Dessons (8+16)	59	24	41%
	Freeman Court - Gordon Road	47	11	23%
	Kynoch Court	54	17	31%
	Langland & Nottage	46	22	48%
	O'Donoghue Hse/Thors Oak	70	32	46%
<b>Sth Ockendon Aveley &amp; Purfleet</b>	Benyon	36	15	42%
	Broome Place	25	18	72%
	Helford Court	29	26	90%
	Jack Evans	39	14	36%
	Mulberry Drive	39	20	51%
	Rookery Court	35	21	60%
	The Rowans	29	15	52%
	The Sycamores incl N. Malt (14+5)	53	19	36%
	Chichester	6	2	33%
<b>Total resident attendents</b>		<b>1386</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>43%</b>

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## **Appendix 7 – decommissioning of unsuitable and/or hard to let sheltered housing**

The Council currently owns 1386 properties which are defined as sheltered housing, and located within 29 sheltered schemes. Many have a communal hall.

Criteria for an allocation of sheltered property are found within the Council's Allocations Scheme at section 12:

*In order to be eligible for these schemes applicants must meet all of the following criteria*

- *60 years and over or aged 55 to 59 years and in receipt of Higher Rate Disability Living Allowance (Mobility or Care element)*
- *Single or joint applicants with no children*
- *In need of the housing support provided by the scheme*

### **Properties “unsuitable” for sheltered housing**

A number of the schemes have been identified as unsuitable for sheltered housing due to various factors including:

- Too far from public transport and shops e.g. Rookery Court, West Thurrock
- Above ground floor level – 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor accommodation – with no lift. There are 611 sheltered properties located in buildings on the 1st floor or above, and of these properties, 82.4% have no lift service. It is not anticipated that all of these would be unsuitable since many sheltered housing residents can manage a flight of stairs. However properties on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, or with other factors that affect their suitability, could be considered for decommissioning.
- Mixed properties i.e. where there are sheltered flats on ground level and general needs properties above
- Properties on a steep hill
- Schemes which are closely located to other schemes resulting in an abundance of sheltered housing within a small area
- Schemes requiring major and costly works to bring them up to an acceptable standard and/or DDA compliance

Often tenants indicate their wish to transfer from these properties but unless they have an identified need for a priority move (e.g. a medical need) it may take some time for a transfer to be achieved.

Many of the flats within these schemes are difficult to let and may have to be advertised a number of times before a suitable tenant is found.

### **Proposal:**

Schemes designated unsuitable and/or hard to let are decommissioned (i.e. the sheltered housing service is removed) and all current sheltered tenants of these schemes are offered the opportunity to decant to alternative suitable sheltered accommodation or to remain in the block without a sheltered service.

### **Decanting tenants from Decommissioned blocks**

The housing allocations scheme provides the process for permanently decanting tenants. However due to the age groups and potential vulnerability involved, extra sensitivity will be required and assisted bidding would be offered.

Tenants must be consulted and given choice over where they wish to move. They must be offered assistance with the practical elements of moving. Compensation in line with statutory requirements will need to be provided (see Appendix 8 – Home Loss and Disturbance payments).

The Housing allocations scheme allows the highest banding (Band 1) for tenants who are permanently decanting. Since tenants would be able to bid for properties of their choosing it is difficult to predict how long it would take to decant all those indicating their wish to move. But with flexibility once a decant has been agreed the move could be achieved within a few months since tenants would have the highest priority for 75% of all advertised sheltered properties. However, this is subject to the requirements of tenants and availability of alternative desirable sheltered accommodation.

### **Support programme for decanting tenants**

When a block or scheme has been identified for decommissioning an open meeting with tenants of the scheme will be arranged as soon as is practically possible – it is important that tenants hear of the decision first hand. Family members and friends will be able to attend the meeting to support tenants.

Tenants will be given the option to remain at the property without the sheltered service or to transfer to an alternative sheltered property of their choosing, subject to availability and priority. The implications for each option will be explained at the initial tenants meeting and again at a follow up meeting with each individual tenant.

Should the tenant wish to move, an officer will assist them with completing an online application form and ensure that their application attracts the highest priority banding. Assisted bidding will be offered – this could range from sending a weekly list of available properties, telephoning to discuss properties and placing bids on the tenants behalf.

A dedicated housing officer will manage the decanting process from start to finish so that tenants have a single point of contact within the Council. This will include the following:-

- Contacting the tenant when possible suitable accommodation becomes available
- Attending the viewing of the new property with the tenant
- Arranging for Home Loss and disturbance payments to be made as appropriate
- Arranging the practicalities around the move e.g. removals, redirection of post, disconnection & reconnection of cookers etc.
- Arranging for decoration of the new property if appropriate

A handy person service will be provided to tenants so that all small DIY jobs can be performed e.g. removing and re-hanging curtains, pictures, shelves etc.

The amount of support provided will be tailored to the tenant's requirements and dependent on other support networks. This will be discussed during the initial meeting with the tenant to ensure that all anxieties about the process are addressed.

### **Time scales for decanting properties**

Where it has been agreed that a scheme should be decommissioned all tenants would be advised of the decommissioning and offered the support programme.

There are two options for the next stage of the process:

- Option One:

A date would be identified for when the removal of the sheltered housing service would take effect. This would depend on the size of the scheme but is envisaged to be between 6 and 12 months. This would be subject to availability of suitable alternative accommodation.

Where the future use of the scheme is for general needs, any void properties in the interim would be advertised and let as general needs accommodation – however, the lettings would be treated with sensitivity in view of the remaining sheltered tenants.

Where the future use of the scheme is for specialised clients (see below) – negotiations would take place with Social Services to determine suitable new tenants and or any lease arrangements. Again sensitivity to the needs of remaining sheltered tenants would be required and if necessary properties may need to remain void or be used for temporary accommodation on a licence basis.

Once the service removal date was reached the sheltered housing service would be removed. This includes the removal of all sheltered equipment such as pull cords and Tunstall systems.

- Option two

The sheltered service would be gradually wound down but would remain in place until the last sheltered tenant who had indicated they wish to move, had vacated.

Whilst this option gives more assurance to the tenants in terms of a service being available it could severely delay the decommissioning programme and cause more uncertainty for tenants.

### **Future use of decommissioned properties**

The future use of decommissioned properties will be considered on a case by case basis but options would include:

- Specialist client groups

The desire to move long term residents out of unsuitable residential care placements, alongside the increasing need to reduce costs to the general fund for such placements, has resulted in discussions between Social Care services and housing regarding availability of alternative accommodation which could be set up as supported housing.

Subsequently it has been identified that one or two decommissioned sheltered schemes could provide suitable accommodation for other client groups, for example clients with mental health issues.

- General needs accommodation

There is a shortage of one bedroom accommodation for singles and couples waiting to be housed or transferred into smaller accommodation.

There are currently 4945<sup>1</sup> applicants on the Councils Housing waiting lists and of these 2432 (49%) are waiting for 1 bedroom properties.

Of those waiting for 1 bedroom properties

- 1998 (82%) are waiting for general needs accommodation
- 428 (17%) have a priority banding
- 130 (5%) would like to downsize from a larger property

- Use of Halls and ex-warden accommodation

Some decommissioned schemes will have halls and/or ex-warden accommodation attached to the scheme. These can be utilised to meet a variety of needs including:

- Community halls
- Resource centres for mobile officers
- Day care provision for support groups e.g. dementia support groups
- Respite care
- Specialised accommodation for those with autism

Recent examples of successful co-operation with Adult Social Care, Children's Services and providers such as Family Mosaic, to provide supported housing to groups such as those with Learning Disabilities has highlighted how joint working can achieve successful outcomes.

### **Initial recommendations for decommissioning**

The following schemes have been identified for decommissioning:

#### **Extra Care Properties at Piggs Corner and Kynoch Court**

75<sup>2</sup> of the 1386 sheltered properties are also designated as Extra Care accommodation;

- 55 flats at Piggs Corner, Grays
- 20 flats at Kynoch Court in Stanford-le-Hope

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<sup>1</sup> Data from Thurrock Choice Homes on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2014

<sup>2</sup> This figure excludes other properties within these schemes which are not defined as Extra Care.

The extra care flats are located together within one section of the schemes. There are other flats within the scheme which are not extra care

Allocations of Extra Care properties have to meet further criteria beyond the requirement for sheltered, which is examined via a joint panel of housing and social care officers.

Tenants of these properties have care needs requiring a higher level of support which is provided via a care package from Adult Social Care (ASC). Subsequently, although the current sheltered service offer is made available to them, they do not require it. In essence it is a doubling of support provision and potential cost to the tenant (i.e. a tenant will be receiving a package of support from carers who are visiting daily – why would they require a daily call from the sheltered housing officers to see if they are ok).

Discussions with ASC have resulted in the decision that the extra care properties are removed from Sheltered Housing stock. The tenancy management would continue with the housing department along with the allocation process but ASC would be solely responsible for the support of tenants.

This would not affect the remaining sheltered housing tenants within these schemes – the sheltered housing service would continue in these properties.

### 1. Langland Close and Nottage Close - Corringham

Appendix 6 shows that sheltered properties in Langland Close and Nottage Close are often hard to let, but they are also unsuitable for sheltered accommodation because of their lack of lift facility and their location.

The properties are situated in 4 blocks of 11 flats – two each side of a busy road.

- 12 x ground floor (3 in each block)
- 16 x 1<sup>st</sup> floor (4 in each block)
- 16 x 2<sup>nd</sup> floor (4 in each block)

32 flats are above ground floor with no lift.

The following chart indicates the breakdown with regards to transfer applications:

Floor level	No. of Tenants			Total
	Live Transfer Applications	Previous Transfer Applications*	No Transfer Applications	
Ground Floor	1	0	11	12
1st Floor	4	2	10	16
2nd Floor	5	3	8	16
	10	5	29	44

\*Tenants previously had transfer applications but did not renew them when the CBL system changed to an online application form in May 2013.

This indicates that 44% of the tenants in flats above ground level have indicated, either now or in the past that they would like to move.

Age Groups	
Under 60	3
60 to 65	6
66 to 80	19
Over 80	6
Age unknown**	10
Total	44

\*\* These are long term tenants with tenancy start dates before 1999. There are currently no details of dates of birth on Saffron or Novalet.

## 2. Chichester Close – Aveley

Chichester Close consists of 8 flats within 2 blocks.

- 4 x ground floor flats (2 in each block)
- 4 x 1<sup>st</sup> floor flats (2 in each block)

There are no lifts.

The scheme is annexed to The Sycamores and New Malting's with a shared communal hall. However the two blocks are physically isolated from the main complex and communal hall and tenants have to walk around the scheme to gain access.

The 1<sup>st</sup> floor flats have often been difficult to let and subsequently one flat has been leased to Family Mosaic for learning disability clients.

Another 1<sup>st</sup> floor flat was previously leased to Family Mosaic under the same programme but the scheme proved so successful that the young tenant with learning disabilities was allocated the property on a permanent basis because of the shortage of sheltered tenants bidding for the flats.

This means there are currently only 6 sheltered tenants. One tenant has a live transfer application and one had a previous application that was not renewed when the online application form was implemented in 2013.

Age Groups of tenants	
Non sheltered	2
60 to 65	3
66 to 80	3
Over 80	0
Total	8

Chichester Close flats have been identified as requiring a number of major works in a recent survey.

The impact of the disruption to tenants whilst works are being carried out has yet to be assessed but it may require tenants to be decanted on a temporary basis.



### 3. Alexander Road and Dunlop Road – Tilbury

This scheme consists of 10 blocks with 4 flats in each block

- 20 x ground floor flats (2 in each block)
- 20 x 1<sup>st</sup> floor flats (2 in each block)

20 Flats are above ground floor with no lift

The flats are surrounded by general needs accommodation and close to a school but are not nearby any other public amenities such as shops, GP surgery etc. This makes them unpopular; recently one flat was advertised 12 times before a successful bidder could be found.

There are lots of issues with ASB in the area and the properties need major works to upgrade the ramps in line with DDA compliance.

There is a hall attached to the scheme which would be ideal for day care provision for dementia sufferers who would be brought in via transport. Discussions with Adult Social Care have indicated that the four flats at Dunlop Road would be ideal for supported housing for people with mental health issues.

Age Groups of tenants	
Under 60	3
60 to 65	10
66 to 80	16
Over 80	8
Age unknown	3
Total	40

### 4. St Cedds Court – Grays

This is a mixed community scheme with 34 sheltered flats on the ground floor, and general needs accommodation (Studio and 3 bedroom maisonettes) above. There are issues for tenants regarding noise levels, children and ASB.

There are also major works required to bring ramps at the properties up to DDA compliance and there are currently covered walkways between the sheltered flats that need to be up graded to meet fire compliance – if the blocks were not sheltered housing, these would be removed.

Age Groups of tenants	
Under 60	6
60 to 65	4
66 to 80	14
Over 80	6
Age unknown	3
Void	1

Total	34
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### 5. Montreal Road and Newton Road – Tilbury

This scheme comprises of 32 flats

- 16 x ground floor (4 in each block)
- 16 x 1<sup>st</sup> floor ( 4 in each block)

There is no lift

Tenants have access to the communal hall at Mahoney Hall but it is a distance from the flats which are situated in the middle of general needs properties and isolated from the other properties within the scheme.

Age Groups of tenants	
Under 60	4
60 to 65	6
66 to 80	14
Over 80	3
Age unknown	4
Void	1
Total	32

Summary of potential decommissioned properties

Scheme	Sheltered Tenancies
Chichester Close	8
Langland Close	22
Nottage Close	22
Montreal road	16
Newton Road	16
St Cedds Court	34
Alexandra Road	35
Dunlop Road	4
Total	157

On the basis that an average of 145 sheltered properties are relet each year, (see chart below) of which 75% would be available for tenants transferring with a priority band, it is clear that the decommissioning programme could take a number of years especially if the tenant only wants to move to a particular scheme. However, this is mitigated by the fact that decanting tenants are awarded the highest possible banding (band 1) and therefore would only be competing against other decanting tenants for properties of their choice.

Appendix 7

Properties re-let 2009 to 2014	Total	Average per year	Average per month
Aveley	64	13	1
South Ockendon	39	8	1
SLH & Corringham	130	26	2
Tilbury	113	23	2
Garrison Purfleet	13	3	0
Grays	252	50	4
Chadwell	87	17	1
West Thurrock	27	5	0
	725	145	12

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## Appendix 8 - Home Loss and Disturbance Payments

There are two types of compensatory payments made to Council tenants who have to move due to improvements to, or redevelopment of, their home:

### 1. Home Loss payments

This payment is only made when a **permanent move** is required or agreed.

<sup>1</sup>Legislation determines the criteria for when a home loss payment must be made:

- The tenant must be required to move because of the need to carry out some improvement or redevelopment to their property (including change of use i.e. decommissioning sheltered properties)
- The tenant must have lived in the property as their only or principal home for at least the preceding 12 months
- The tenant must move as a result of the improvement or redevelopment i.e. it cannot be because they wanted to move and had achieved a transfer in the usual manner under the allocations policy

Where the tenant does not meet this criterion he/she may be entitled to a lesser amount of discretionary compensation – Disturbance Payment.

<sup>2</sup>The amount that must be paid is currently **£4700 per household**

### 2. Disturbance Payments

This payment may be made for permanent moves, (where a home loss payments is not applicable) but can also be offered for temporary moves. Whilst it is a discretionary payment, it is generally viewed as good practice within the housing industry, and is designed to cover the costs of moving. This includes but is not limited to:

- Disconnection and reconnection of services
- Removals
- Storage
- Carpets & Curtains

The amount paid should be the actual cost incurred but should not be more than the equivalent home loss payment i.e. less than £4700.

Sheltered housing tenants, moving to alternative sheltered accommodation because of decommissioning, may be entitled to both Home Loss and Disturbance payments up to a maximum of £9400 per household.

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<sup>1</sup> The Land Compensation Act 1973, (s29 and s30) as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 (s68)

<sup>2</sup> The Home Loss Payments (Prescribed Amounts) (England) Regulations 2008 SI 1598

Cost of decommissioning

If 157 sheltered properties were decommissioned over the next 5 years – the maximum cost in terms of compensation would be £1.5 million or £300k per year.

## Appendix 9 – Analysis of the Service offer

Consideration is given to the current sheltered housing service model and what would be required to achieve a more consistent and efficient service.

### Current service offer

Each scheme has its own sheltered housing officer (SHO) who works full time at the scheme and covers other schemes for sickness, holidays and training as required.

The SHO offers:

- Help in setting up and maintaining the home e.g. advice on security, service providers and health & safety
- Understanding the tenancy agreement – paying rent, repairs, good neighbour behaviour, tenant involvement etc.
- Managing finances – accessing benefits, money management
- Support with well-being – monitoring of health, personal safety, accessing services including assistance with personal care
- Social support – e.g. advice and information on the schemes' social activities, accessing external activities, making decisions
- Other support – emergency assistance, advocacy, making a complaint

A recent informal exercise with sheltered housing officers required them to write down their daily working activities for three days of a specific week.

The exercise clearly identified the inconsistencies of work load between officers and showed that many officers were spending much of their time in social activities with the tenants e.g. taking a group of tenants to the pub for lunch, playing bingo and cooking lunches. The inconsistencies were particularly noticeable between officers managing larger and smaller schemes.

The exercise also highlighted the capacity for SHOs to carry out many more functions.

Officers managing the largest schemes (70 to 90 tenants) still identified gaps in time when they were not engaging in administrative, support or signposting activities.

Their hours can be broken down into the following:

Daily activities: approximately 3 - 4 hours per day (60 to 80 hours per month)

- Daily call to each tenant via intercom or face to face
- Assisting tenants to deal with emergency repairs i.e. reporting via contact centre
- Health & safety checks – a daily walk around scheme carrying out a visual check
- Administrative tasks – checking emails, general admin etc.

Weekly activities: approximately 4 - 5 hours per week (16 to 20 hours per month)

- Health & safety – fire checks
- Updating support plans

## Appendix 9

- Signing up new tenants – in the year 2013/14 there were 173 new sheltered housing tenancies – an average of 6 per scheme in a year.

Monthly activities: 4-5 hours per month

- Health and safety checks
- Residents meetings

General welfare support: up to 10 hours per month

This element of support is hard to quantify since it is not consistent in time scale and fluctuates depending on tenant's circumstances. It includes

- Emotional support during bereavement or times of depression
- Supporting domestic abuse victims
- Dealing with neighbour disputes.

### **Analysis of service**

Based on the above figures, the time currently spent by an SHO of a large scheme (70 residents) in administrative, support or signposting activities is 90 to 115 hours per month out of a possible 148 hours (based on 4 working weeks at 37 hours per week).

This represents only 61% to 77% (average 69%) of officer time and indicates that an officer could manage 100 tenants if working to 100% capacity.

There are currently 29 sheltered housing officers with approximately 1380 tenants – an average of 47 per officer.

Based on the figures above, and with a reduction of 10% of sheltered properties through the decommissioning of some schemes, 1200 tenants could be managed by 12 officers – a reduction of 17 officers.

However, this would represent officers working at 100% capacity with no provision for holiday, sickness, training or meeting attendance.

Assuming each of the 12 officers has the following per annum:

- 30 days annual leave
- Average 11 days sickness, bereavement, compassionate leave etc.
- 30 days of training & meeting attendance

A requirement of 71 days cover per officer would be needed to ensure 100% cover of all schemes during the working week each year. With 12 officers needing cover the requirement is for 852 days of cover which requires a further 4 floating officers.

In order to manage the 16 officers the current two team leaders would be required and the service manager (currently the sheltered housing manager).

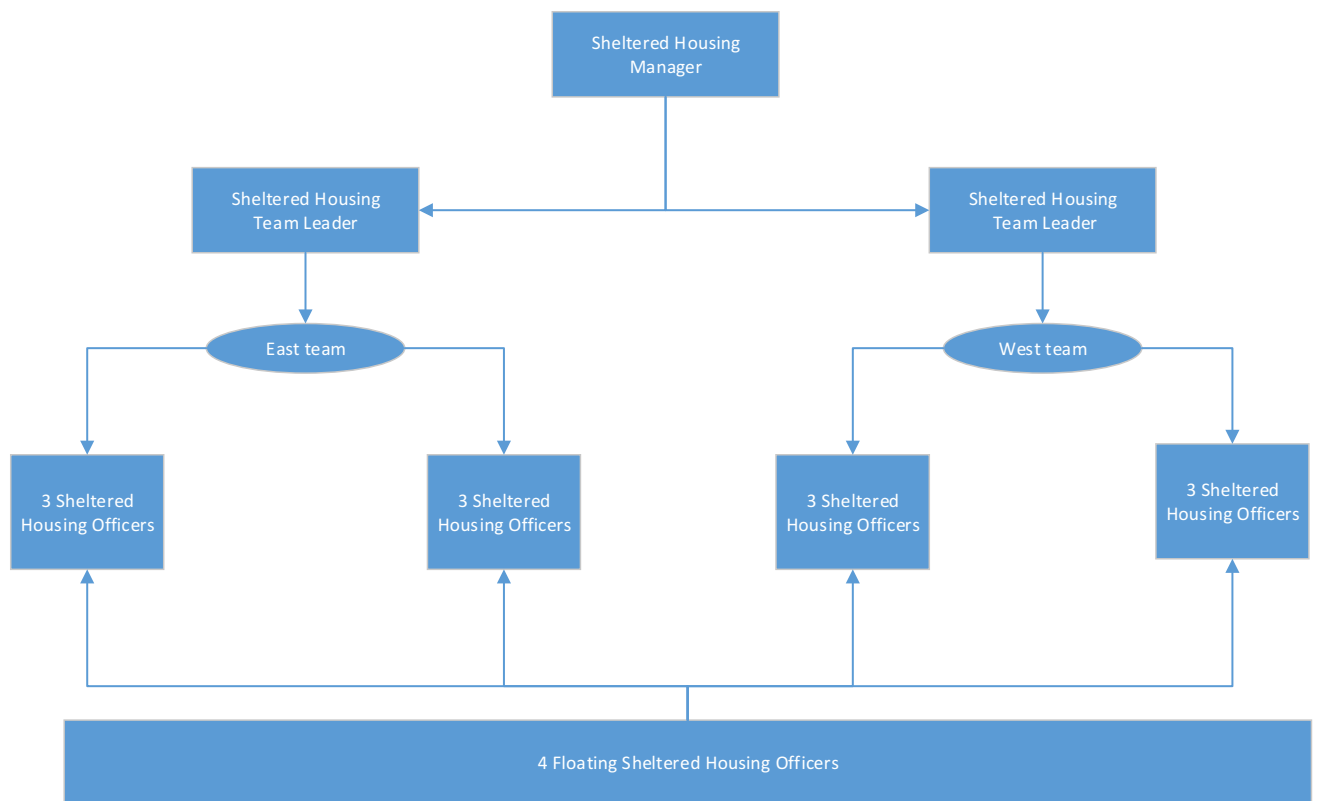


### New Service Model

With 12 officers covering 100 tenants each, the sheltered housing schemes should be split into two areas, east and west with two teams of 3 officers in each. This mirrors the new working arrangements with the tenancy management team. The 4 floating officers would cover areas as required.

The 2 team leaders would manage the east and west area with 8 officers each.

That chart below summarise this.



### Comparison of cost

The current structure consists of

- 29 sheltered housing officers at Band 4
- 2 x team leaders at Band 6
- 1 x sheltered housing manager at Band 7

Total cost of staffing is around £760,000

## Appendix 9

Current staffing structure	Band	Min £	Max £	Average £	No. of officers	Total £	Plus costs at 20% £
Sheltered housing officers	4	16,410	21,414	18,912	29	548,448	658,138
Team Leaders	6	22,059	30,531	26,295	2	52,590	63,108
Sheltered Housing Manager	7	26,331	37,557	31,944	1	31,944	38,333
<b>Total</b>					<b>32</b>	<b>632,982</b>	<b>759,578</b>

The new structure would consist of

- 16 x sheltered housing officers at Band 5
- 2 x team leaders at Band 6
- 1 x sheltered housing manager at Band 8

The new structure would involve a change of duties for the sheltered housing officers and sheltered housing manager – which would include some of the duties of the new tenancy management teams. Therefore the banding for the new roles would need to be mirrored – subject to job evaluation.

Subsequently the staffing costs would change:

Proposed staffing structure	Band	Min £	Max £	Average £	No. of officers	Total £	Plus costs at 20% £
Sheltered housing officers	5	19,599	25,557	22,578	16	361,248	433,498
Team Leaders	6	22,059	30,531	26,295	2	52,590	63,108
Sheltered Housing Manager	8	31,449	46,158	38,804	1	38,804	46,564
<b>Total</b>					<b>19</b>	<b>452,642</b>	<b>543,170</b>

This represents a saving of around £216,400 per annum.

Comparison of cost to tenants (based on 1200 sheltered housing tenants)

	Per annum £	Per week £
Current cost per resident	633	12.17
Proposed cost per resident	453	8.70
Saving per resident	180	3.47

Staff Consultation

The reduction in posts would require the usual staff consultation, some redundancies and job evaluations in line with corporate policy.

### **New Service offer**

The sheltered housing consultation highlighted the inconsistencies within the service and this was further reinforced by the exercise carried out with current sheltered housing officers.

The new service should be streamlined and consistent with a clearly defined service offer:

- Daily contact with tenants during the working week – this could be via telephone, email or exceptionally by home visit, depending on the preference and needs of the tenant
- Signposting/referring to other services – repairs, support services, advice agencies etc. Officers to assist tenants in maintaining their independence.
- Maintaining support plans and liaising with other services such as social care as appropriate
- Statutory duties – health & safety checks, fire assessments, safeguarding and risk assessments
- New tenancy sign ups – at an average of 173 per year this equates to around 11 sign ups per officer per year
- Tenancy management – tenancy monitoring, assignments, legal action, ASB – since all sheltered housing tenants are secure tenants there is no requirement to monitor introductory tenancies
- Encourage and support tenants to set up and manage their own scheme social activities – officers will not regularly take part in such activities but may be involved in the initial set up. Officers will not cook lunches or other meals for tenants during their working day.

Mobile officers will work from a number of hubs and will not have a “home” scheme or office, in line with the new corporate flexible working arrangements.

Work processes will be streamlined to enable efficiencies and Officers will be expected to use laptops, EDRMs and electronic documents in line with other mobile workers e.g. tenancy management officers. All support plans and documents will be stored and managed electronically.

Teams will work on a rota system so that the teams change around on a regular basis e.g. every 3 months. This will highlight any inconsistencies in service which can then be managed.

Quality monitoring of the service will be introduced by the Business Improvement team and managed by team leaders and the sheltered housing manager.

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## Housing Overview & Scrutiny work programme – 2014-15

Meeting Dates: 16 July 2014, 24 September 2014, 26 November 2014, 7 January 2015, 18 February 2015, 18 March 2015

ITEM	RESOLUTION	DATE REQUESTED BY COMMITTEE	Lead Officer	Brought to Committee by (Officer/ Member/ Statutory Reason)	PROPOSED DATE FOR SUBMISSION TO COMMITTEE
<b>Sheltered Housing Accommodation Charges</b>	Agreed that the item be included in the work programme for the following Municipal Year (minute 34(1), 2/4/14 refers)	2 April 2014	Richard Parkin	Members	16 July 2014
<b>Recharging Tenants Audit Update</b>	Agreed that a re-audit takes place during 2014/15 and the results be reported back to this Committee (minute 33 (1), 2/4/14 refers)	2 April 2014	Barbara Brownlee	Barbara Brownlee	24 September 2014
<b>Garages Update</b>	Agreed that a report on garages be included on the work programme for the following Municipal Year (minute 26 (1), 30/1/14 refers)	30 January 2014	Richard Parkin	Members	24 September 2014
<b>Homeless Applications Update</b>	Agreed that the item be included in the work programme for the following Municipal Year (minute 34(1), 2/4/14 refers)	2 April 2014	Dermot Moloney	Members	24 September 2014

ITEM	RESOLUTION	DATE REQUESTED BY COMMITTEE	Lead Officer	Brought to Committee by (Officer/ Member/ Statutory Reason)	PROPOSED DATE FOR SUBMISSION TO COMMITTEE
<b>Gloriana Progress Report</b>	Agreed that the item be included in the work programme for the following Municipal Year (minute 34(1), 2/4/14 refers)	2 April 2014	Angela Housham	Members	26 November 2014
<b>Report on Private Landlords and Tenants</b>	Agreed that the item be included in the work programme for the following Municipal Year (minute 34(1), 2/4/14 refers)	2 April 2014	Richard Parkin	Members	26 November 2014
<b>Right to Buy Programme</b>	Agreed that the item be included in the work programme for the following Municipal Year (minute 34(1), 2/4/14 refers)	2 April 2014	Richard Parkin	Members	7 January 2015
<b>Budget</b>	n/a	n/a	Sean Clark	Ongoing requirement	Ongoing