

13 December 2016		ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Sheltered Housing Changes to Service – Update		
Wards and communities affected: All Wards & Sheltered Housing Community		Key Decision: Yes
Report of: Sue Kane, Sheltered Housing Manager		
Accountable Head of Service: Les Billingham, Head of Service for Adults, Housing and Health		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris ,Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is an update on the Sheltered Housing service following changes agreed to the support provided in February 2015.		

Executive Summary

In February 2015 Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted a programme of change in service model to the sheltered housing service across the borough.

The decision followed a detailed review and analysis of sheltered accommodation and a full consultation with residents during 2013 -14.

Subsequently, it was agreed to change the service model and introduce a service charge to new tenants, entering the service.

This report provides an update on the current service and reactions to the changes.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Note this update report concerning the Sheltered Housing service.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Thurrock Sheltered Housing currently provides 1283 units of sheltered accommodation at 30 sites across the borough. As at 28th November 2016 there were 1261 active tenancies producing a void level of 1.7% (22 tenancies). None of the current voids are long term.

- 2.2 Current satisfaction levels with the Estate Officers service is good with over 80% of tenants judging the service as good or above. Of the 489 tenants who responded to the latest survey 35% scored the service as excellent, this was an improvement from the previous year where the percentage was 26%; this is an encouraging outcome as the previous year was the one in which the changes to the service were made. Other results were as follows:

Result	%	Year	%	Year
Good	48%	2016	58%	2015
Fair	10%	2016	7%	2015
Poor	3%	2016	6%	2015
Very Poor	3%	2016	2%	2015

Managing the estate office was the major change to the service in 2015; therefore these results are directly with regard to service improvement.

The satisfaction rates recorded concerning the whole service in 2016 are also reassuring with a rate of 87% of good or above being achieved.

- 2.3 Anti-social behaviour (ASB) remains a concern given the vulnerability of the tenants in Sheltered Housing. However, the service is successfully managing ASB, with only 3 recorded open cases as at 28th November 2016. Clearly the service needs to remain vigilant and there have been a number of successful initiatives undertaken with colleagues in the Safer Communities team, including stay safe events and raising awareness of alcoholism.
- 2.4 Currently 54% of tenants living in sheltered accommodation are eligible for a disability related benefit with 5% requiring a high level of support due to the extent of their vulnerability. On average there are around 430 daily contacts (34% of total tenancies) or approximately 14.5 per complex. This level of activity is indicative of the growing complexity of need found within sheltered housing. In spite of this increased vulnerability the recent survey showed that 4 out of 5 tenants of sheltered housing were aware of the repairs contact number. This is encouraging evidence of the success of the “independent living” approach adopted last year.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 In spite of this reassuring set of survey results it is clear that not everything implemented as part of the service improvement has been a success. The additional responsibilities of estate management have proved difficult to absorb within the sheltered housing team and therefore we have recently added 3 extra members of staff. Independent living (IL) is the right model for the future of the service however in order to deliver this successfully it is vital that IL plans are agreed with the tenants and reviewed regularly. Staffing levels agreed as part of the original service improvement did not facilitate the completion and review of individual plans, hence the need to review staffing resources.

- 3.2 During the initial changes tenants expressed concerns regarding the impact, they felt the service changes had e.g. reduction in amount of time spent at each site. Tenants were used to seeing officers on site 37 hours per week and therefore the new service was a big change. Team leaders and manager visited the sites and attended residents meeting and were able to reassure them that the new service model actually assists them to be more independent and encourages them to plan and action their own activities. However, it was also agreed to increase the team to 18 officers and 3 team leaders.
- 3.3 The service is now divided into 3 teams of 6 officers, 5 officers cover two sites each, with one officer covering absences such as annual leave and sickness. There are 3 team leaders who manage one team of 6 officers. These changes to are providing a more effective service across the borough.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The results presented in this report from the tenant's survey indicate a high level of satisfaction amongst sheltered housing tenants. However, a management review of the service changes during this year identified challenges that would have threatened the ongoing performance of the service. This review highlighted the need to increase staff numbers and deploy them differently in order to ensure the Independent Living model is continued to be rolled out.
- 4.2 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested an update of the sheltered housing service as part of the service improvement implemented to deliver Independent Living. Therefore the recommendation is for the committee to note the outcome of the service changes, and note the recent further improvements made.

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

- 5.1 Consultation regarding the changes introduces in 2015 was undertaken. The recommendations in this report are management actions which will increase the resource to support tenants; therefore there is no need for a further period of consultation.

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

- 6.1 The changes recommended in this report will improve the performance of the sheltered housing and tenancy management to our tenants.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis**
HRA and Development Accountant

No financial implications, this report is for information only.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**
Housing Solicitor/Team Leader

There are no legal implications arising from this report, which provides an update for information purposes only.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

Whilst the impact of these changes will directly affect tenants of sheltered housing who are primarily older people and therefore a protected group under legislation, the changes have improved the quality of the service they will receive. Therefore the changes will have a positive impact.

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

- No implications.

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 Overview and Scrutiny report 16 July 2014
- Housing Overview and Scrutiny report 6 October 2016

9. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

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Sheltered Housing Manager