

18 February 2015

ITEM: 5

Housing Overview and Scrutiny

Sheltered Housing Decommissioning – Next steps

Wards and communities affected:

Aveley and Uplands
Stanford East and Corringham
Stifford Clays

Key Decision:

NA

Report of: Richard Parkin – Head of Housing Community and Needs

Accountable Head of Service: Richard Parkin – Head of Housing Community and Needs

Accountable Director: Barbara Brownlee – Director of Housing and Commercial Services

This report is public.

Executive Summary

This report follows a previous report presented to Housing Overview and Scrutiny on 16th July 2014. The report was a review of the Sheltered Housing Service and the committee agreed that:

1. The outcome of the Sheltered Housing Consultation were noted
2. That the current policy whereby sheltered housing properties are not generally let to people aged less than 60 year be maintained.
3. That the decommissioning of some hard to let and/or unsuitable sheltered housing properties, as outlined in the report, be recommended for approval
4. That a new sheltered housing service model, as outlined, be recommended for approval
5. That one of the options for future funding is recommended for approval.
6. That the consultation outcomes be published

There was a commitment to the Committee that the Housing Department, when looking to progress with decommissioning, would return with details of how it was to do this.

Due to the double purdah periods that the council experienced in 2014 the department was delayed in this process and is now looking to move forward.

This report outlines the intention of how the department intends to complete the decommissioning.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the committee notes the report and endorses the approach to decommissioning of the identified units/schemes.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 On 16th July 2014 the Housing Department reported back to the Committee on the Sheltered Housing Review and consultation that had taken place. The committee supported the items put forward, including the decommissioning of select Sheltered Housing units due to lack of desirability or due to them being unfit for purpose.

2.2 The initial report highlighted seven potential schemes to be decommissioned and this report proposes to move forward on three schemes or part schemes and how this will be completed.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Although initially seven schemes were recommended for decommissioning, Housing are intending to have a dedicated officer for the decommissioning and due to Thurrock not wanting to have a high level of void properties, decided to complete this process in phases. Phase 1 being the three schemes highlighted below.

3.2 Any decommission that will take place will have the following principles:

- I. It is intended that no tenant will be forced to move from their current accommodation.
- II. Tenants will receive a disturbance payment which will cover the cost of moving, storage and reasonable new furnishings needed in their new property.
- III. Tenants will be supported by a dedicated officer to help them with the decommissioning.

3.3 The approach to the three suggested schemes are documented below

Langland and Nottage

3.4 Langland and Nottage is a Sheltered Housing Scheme in Corringham consisting of 4 three story blocks with 11 properties each. The blocks are separated by a major road meaning that two blocks aren't within the bounds of the Sheltered Housing Scheme and have no direct or convenient access to the communal facilities.

3.5 Added to the issues highlighted in 3.4 due to the nature of the block, three stories and no lift, they are very difficult to let to older residents. This is

particularly so in the properties which are distant from the Sheltered Housing Scheme.

- 3.6 The intention with this scheme is to decommission the two blocks that are distant from the scheme (22 properties) and at some point turn the block into general needs properties.
- 3.7 The department is intending to take a phased approach with the process. In the first instance we will work with the tenants who already had identified that they wish to move (of which there are a significant amount) and try to find them suitable accommodation elsewhere. These tenants will still receive the disturbance payment. Decanted properties will remain void and not be filled at this time.
- 3.8 Once this part of the process has been completed we will review who is left in the properties and set a reasonable date (3 to 6 months) for when the Sheltered Housing Service will be removed from the properties. This will give the remaining tenants time to be supported in moving, or will give them the opportunity to remain in their current home. The date set is the date that the properties will revert to General Needs and we will fill any void properties through the usual lettings policy.
- 3.9 Any tenant who wishes to stay in their property will be able to pay the current £8 a week fee if they wish to still have access to the Sheltered Communal Hall and a Sheltered Housing Officer who will support them on an outreach basis.
- 3.10 If after a period of time (up to 1 year) the tenants who have stayed find that they have changed their mind and wish to move then they will be given dedicated support and will receive a disturbance payment for doing so.

St Cedds

- 3.11 St Cedds is unique in that the scheme is already mixed with general needs properties. It has 34 sheltered flats on the ground floor with general needs accommodation above (studio flats and three bedroom maisonettes).
- 3.12 Given that the scheme is already co-located with general needs properties there is no intention that the voids properties will be held in this scheme but will be filled as soon as they become vacant through the usual lettings route.
- 3.13 In the first instance we will once again work with people who already want to move and support them to move. Once we have completed this we will set a date (3 to 6 months) before the removal of the Sheltered Housing service.
- 3.14 As with Langland and Nottage, use of the hall and a sheltered housing outreach service will be offered at a fee. Equally people will have up to a year after the removal of service to opt into moving out of their property and receiving a home loss payment.

Chichester Close

- 3.15 Chichester Close in Aveley consists of two blocks containing 4 flats. It is annexed to the Sycamores and New Maltings however is entirely separate from the schemes. The first floor flats in these blocks have been difficult to let.
- 3.16 Tenants at Chichester have previously complained about their living conditions and the quality of their properties and although work has taken place to remedy some of the issues a full technical assessment will need to take place on the future of the blocks.
- 3.17 It is intended that the decommissioning of Chichester Close will follow the same lines of Langland and Nottage, however the properties when void will receive a comprehensive survey before deciding their future.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 This report is for noting. It is believed that a very fair approach will be taken towards decommission with as little stress and impact to tenants as possible.

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

- 5.1 Full consultation took place and was fed back in July 2014.

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

- 6.1 None

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

The HRA will need to find the disturbance payments from within their budget next year. However with savings made through the Sheltered Housing restructure these won't create a budget pressure.

It is also worth noting there will be a loss of rental income on the decommissioned properties until they revert to general needs stock and are re-let.

7.2 Legal

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

There are no legal implications for this report.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Teresa Evans**

Equalities and Cohesion Officer

Decommissioning has the potential to seriously impact the lives of older people living in these properties. It is thought that through the approach to decommissioning in two phases we can reduce the impact this may have. The structures and mechanisms we have put in place to support individual tenants during this phase will also mitigate some of the impact.

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

None

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):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

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Head of Housing – Community and Needs

Housing