

## REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

28<sup>th</sup> July 2010

### Review of Redditch Borough Council's Sheltered Housing Stock further to Community Consultation

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Brandon Clayton
Relevant Head of Service	Liz Tompkin
Key Decision	

#### 1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report is brought to you further to the decision of the Executive Committee on 26th August 2009 to approve the Council's Older Persons Housing and Support Strategy and its Action Plan subject to community consultation. That consultation has now been carried out (see Consultation Statistics, Appendix 1) and the Committee is asked to approve the proposed revised categories following the Review of Redditch Borough Council's Sheltered Housing as attached (see Proposed Revised Categories, Appendix 2). The draft action plan has been updated based on progress made and is attached for approval (see Draft Action Plan, Appendix 3).

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** that

- 1) **the preferred options, as determined by Members, from those detailed in Appendix 2, Section 6.1 and 6.2 be approved;**
- 2) **up to £166,150.00 capital funding be approved for the essential improvement works recommended in Appendix 4;**
- 3) **up to £31,051.00 revenue funding be approved to fund the post of Older Persons' Housing Liaison Officer as detailed in Appendix 16 and paragraph 5.5 of this report; and**

**RESOLVE** that

- 4) **based on the findings of the Review of Redditch Borough Council's Sheltered Housing, the categorisation of properties on page 11 in Appendix 2 be adopted;**
- 5) **officers undertake a feasibility study to consider the findings and options in Appendix 2, Section 6.3 and bring a further report back to Councillors within 12 months of this report;**

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- 6) if approved, the above changes only be applied to new tenants from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 with all current residents keeping their tenancy, even if they do not meet the new criteria;
- 7) the revised Action Plan in Appendix 3 be adopted, subject to Councillors' comments;
- 8) an additional member of staff be appointed for twelve months to facilitate the change management process (see Appendix 16); and  
  
subject to the Council's approval of the budgetary implications, as specified separately above, and consequent adjustment of the Capital Programme
- 9) approval be given to incur up to the expenditure detailed in 2) above for the purposes detailed in the report, in accordance with Standing Order 41.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Government is strongly driving change in the housing and support of older people, based on the national profile of an ageing population. Its intention is to raise standards based on 'quality, choice and independence' and to ensure support and services are delivered, as far as possible, at the first level of intervention, in the community and in peoples' homes.
- 3.2 A Strategy was written which shows that significant parts of the Redditch housing stock for older people were set up 25 or more years ago, in accordance with the standards of the day. These do not necessarily meet contemporary standards or peoples' expectations, especially for mobility. The Council undertook a comprehensive assessment of the current stock to look at their fitness for the needs of older people, both now and in the future and produced an Action Plan.
- 3.3 The Executive Committee approved the Older Persons Housing and Support Strategy at their meeting on 26th August 2009 and approved a recommendation for the implementation of the Action Plan, subject to community consultation.
- 3.4 An active period of consultation followed from September to November 2009, during which time various awareness events were held including workshops for scheme residents. A newsletter offering feedback followed.

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The "My Home, My Future, My Choice Residents Group was formed in January, 2010 and continues to meet monthly. A feedback conference was held at the end of March 2010. Questionnaires were taken by the Home Support Officers during May 2010 to vulnerable residents to assess their awareness and understanding and any requests for further contact or information have now been followed up. All scheme tenants and all Councillors were sent invitations to the conferences and press releases were also published. A total of 9 Councillors attended the scheme visit events (see Appendix 1).

**4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 It is important that we are able to meet the needs of many different types of customers. This opportunity will allow us to explore other options for housing those with sensory impairments, younger people with physical disabilities and those with learning difficulties. National statistics show that disabilities are affecting a greater number of people and there is a need to prepare for this in the future.
- 4.2 The Borough has a large and generally excellent portfolio of stock, but few schemes met all the standards we defined. Among the best performing were bungalows, except where there were problems of mobility due to access, poor internal arrangement or inadequate size. The schemes that were least fit for purpose included schemes with a high amount of bedsits, first floor flats, those with poor access and schemes in undesirable or difficult locations. Inadequate parking was also a concern.
- 4.3 Lowering the age limit in some schemes met the objective of reducing the length of time a property was empty and saved loss of revenue. It has worked very well in some schemes but it has led to instances of anti-social behaviour in other schemes due to differing lifestyles. The recent implementation of introductory tenancies will allow the Council to monitor new tenants (where they were not previously a secure tenant) and in the event of a breach of tenancy being highlighted can intervene and act much more quickly. An anti-social behaviour policy exists for all tenancy types so all instances will be addressed, irrespective of tenure.
- 4.4 In April 2009 the Supporting People contract changed from an accommodation based contract to a Floating Support contract for the Home Support Service. Tenants can now choose if they want to receive the support and in accordance with the contract, support can only be offered where there is an assessed need. This has led to very

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independent people living alongside those who are dependant on the Home Support Service.

- 4.5 The “My Home, My Future, My Choice” Consultation to produce the Strategy commenced in 2007, the Strategy was not brought to the Executive Committee for approval until 26th August, 2009. At that time it was approved, however only subject to further community consultation of the implementation of the Action Plan. The length of time the process has taken has lead to increasing anxiety among current residents. It is essential that any changes made as a result of this report are carried out as quickly and as sensitively as possible.
- 4.6 The change management process was adopted when the Strategy was approved and to be applied effectively will require sufficient resource. It is essential that the practicalities of change or any fears of change, however small, are met with a full, personal and dedicated support programme by an experienced compliment of staff.
- 4.7 Recent consultation has identified that residents would feel more secure in older persons housing if the allocation process were more specialised. Further investigation would be required to examine the full implications of this change. The “My Home, My Future, My Choice Residents Group” who meets monthly with officers has already begun discussing Local Lettings Plans criteria. Further consultation surrounding both Local Lettings Plans and the allocation process with affected schemes is essential.
- 4.8 There have been concerns, during the consultation period, that reducing the age of entry to older persons accommodation below 60 will attract the ‘Right to Buy’ and that this may lead to problems in the future. The entry age has already been reduced in some schemes and no applications have been made to be able to measure its effect. It is felt to be a minimal risk as those choosing to rent older persons accommodation are unlikely to opt for an investment in this market. This has however been taken into full consideration.
- 4.9 Fire safety has been highlighted as a serious issue following the recent property inspections in some schemes. It is essential that appropriate precautions are taken urgently.
- 4.10 Some of the Schemes currently qualify for the concessionary T.V. licence and others are on preserved rights. To continue to be eligible for the

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concessionary licence, all tenants within the schemes must fulfil all the four criteria (refer to Appendix 6).

- 4.11 The term “sheltered” accommodation has been under much debate both nationally and locally during recent consultation. The majority of those who expressed a preference agreed it provided a sense of security whilst others found the term derogatory. The Council felt it was important to recognise that as views were mixed it should agree new wording and specific criteria which have been detailed in Appendix 2 on page 11.
- 4.12 The Council has worked closely with staff and Councillors to identify a variety of ways to engage residents. There was an active consultation period which started with staff and public conferences and then various events during September and October 2009. A newsletter was sent out in December 2009 to all scheme tenants, all Councillors, relevant staff, over 50's on the waiting list and those who had expressed an interest during the active consultation period. The project group continued to communicate with tenants from January to March 2010 when a feedback conference was held. Full details of this can be found in Appendix 1.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 In order to improve standards to an acceptable level and taking into account the feelings of residents during consultation the council have proposed a schedule of works that should be carried out.
- 5.2 The Schedule of proposed works and costings can be found at Appendix 4. Listed in the schedule are details of works required to bring the schemes up to the measured standards (see Appendix 7) further to consultation with scheme residents. Essential works are considered to be those that will enhance safety and security. Desirable works are those that would improve quality of life and fixtures and fittings works are those which would improve the look of the scheme.

**The total cost of essential works are: £ 166,150**  
(Priority is the lift installation at Harry Taylor House £45,000)

Works classed as desirable total:	£ 136,700
Fixtures and Fittings total:	£ 29,000
Total costs of works to improve standards (See Appendix 4)	£ 331,850

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- 5.3 The essential works required at the 3 communal schemes that we are proposing should be in Category A, are broken down as follows: (figures are already included in the above total).

Harry Taylor House	£55,500
Arthur Jobson House	£10,100
Ibstock House	£9,000
Total	£74,600

See Appendix 4 for more details.

### Additional Financial Implications

- 5.4 The issues raised regarding car parking will be addressed as part of the existing Car Parking Project which Councillors and Officers are already undertaking across the borough.
- 5.5 In addition to the schedule of works, the council feel that it is essential to engage the services of an Older Persons' Housing Liaison Officer. This is imperative to ensure a sensitive approach and smooth transition period. A draft Job Description can be found in Appendix 5. The total cost of this additional member of staff would be £31,051.00.
- 5.6 Essential upgrading to the Lifeline system in the existing Older Persons Housing will be required in the next few years, with some schemes requiring upgrade by 2012 due to the BT21CN Digital Switchover. The total estimated cost of those works will be approximately £305,000.00. The three communal schemes proposed for Category A (Arthur Jobson House, Harry Taylor House and Ibstock House) have already been upgraded. If lower levels of support are still required within any other scheme, they would be best served by installing independent dispersed Lifeline units to ensure that a call alarm service is delivered and removed when required. A dispersed unit would cost £121.00 plus installation (based at current Tunstall Telecom prices). The latest quotation and breakdown of costs by scheme can be found in Appendix 19.

## 6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) places duties on service providers and requires 'reasonable adjustments' to be made when providing access to goods, facilities, services and premises.

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- 6.2 Since 1st October 2004, Service providers may have to make 'reasonable adjustments' in relation to the physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access (refer to Appendix 8).
- 6.3 Section 167 (1) of the Housing Act 1996 requires each Local Authority to have a scheme for determining priorities in allocating housing accommodation. The existing Housing Allocations Policy already meets the Local Authorities legal requirements.
- 6.4 In order for a dwelling to be exempt from the Right to Buy Scheme the following criteria must be satisfied under paragraph 11 of Schedule 5 of the Housing Act 1985:
- B
- a) It is one of a group particularly suitable for occupation by elderly persons (having regard to its location, size, design, heating system and other features).
  - b) The dwelling houses in the group are usually let to persons aged 60 or above. They need not be let exclusively to the elderly if the other occupants are persons with a physical disability.
  - c) The group is warden controlled. If the warden is not resident, there must be a system for calling him/her and the use of a nearby common room.
- 6.5 If these conditions are not satisfied, the dwelling will not be exempt and (subject to the other requirements of the HA 1985 being fulfilled) the tenant will be entitled to exercise the right to buy (see Appendix 9).

**7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The current Housing Strategy provides the strategic direction generally for older person's housing. This Older Persons Housing Strategy was approved by Full Council on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2009.
- 7.2 The proposed changes would not require any amendment to the Allocations Policy as the Director and Portfolio holder have the delegated authority to introduce Local Lettings Plans where required.

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**8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 8.1 The Review of Redditch Borough Council's Sheltered Housing has highlighted that older people see Safety and Security as being key priorities and this has been addressed in the Strategy and Action Plan. A commitment for all new residents in Category A properties to receive support from the Home Support Service will increase the time that staff are on site and promote the feeling of additional security. A move towards allocations to only over 65 year olds in particular schemes will also seek to reduce the difficulties experienced as a result of lifestyle differences between older and younger residents and contribute towards them feeling safer.
- 8.2 The review has highlighted a number of priorities for the improvement of Older Persons Housing which will make the accommodation more suitable for residents and a more pleasant place to live. The Council has also identified where sensor lighting can be installed and heating systems upgraded which will reduce the running costs of schemes and reduce harmful CO2 emissions.
- 8.3 The proposed new categorisation for Older Persons Housing (see Appendix 2 page 11) aims to make it easier for younger people with disabilities to access accommodation suitable to meet their needs. The review has highlighted that there is inequality between the speed at which those with a disability that are under the age of 50 are able to access accommodation as opposed to those over the age of 50. Currently it takes disabled individuals under 50 years of age 13% longer to access adapted accommodation than disabled individuals over 50 years of age. Research demonstrates that meeting the housing needs of disabled people is key to ensuring that they have the best possible chance of remaining independent, accessing employment and leading fulfilling lives. Given that 38% of those in current Older Persons Housing have little or no support needs it is clear that more priority should be given to younger disabled people with a support need who need to access appropriate accommodation.
- 8.4 In the past twelve months the average allocation time for Older Persons bed-sit accommodation was 23.33 days compared to 12.5 in general let bed-sit accommodation. The difference is due to the low numbers of elderly people interested in bed-sit accommodation and properties often being offered to several people before they are accepted. There are significantly larger numbers of people in housing need under 60 years of age who want bed-sit accommodation and it is clear that widening the age



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range in certain schemes would increase the demand for the accommodation and assist the authority to improve its performance in respect of the following indicators:

- BV212 - Average Number of Days taken to Re-let Council Housing; and
- HH2 – Void Loss Expressed as a percentage of Gross Rent

### **9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 9.1 Failure to approve the recommendations will make it difficult for the Council to achieve national, regional, county and local strategic aims.
- 9.2 If we do not consider reducing the entry age for the allocation of Older Persons Housing in the long term the Council will impede its performance in relation to average re-let times and void loss and may not achieve the required standards during housing inspections.
- 9.3 The Council could be in breach of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in that it has not made reasonable adjustments to remove access barriers to accommodation for disabled people.
- 9.4 The Council may not be able to meet the demand in housing and support from the growing population.
- 9.5 Failure to provide sufficient staffing resource to facilitate the proposed changes could lead to delays and unnecessary distress to tenants. This could also put additional pressure on other front line teams such as the Housing Options Service which is already seeing an increase of customers of up to 30%.
- 9.6 There have been significant changes to Health and Safety Legislation and Fire Regulations. It is predicted that over the next 16 years regulations will become increasingly stringent and that the Council may struggle to make some buildings legally compliant. Failure to consider the options at an early stage may leave the Council at risk of litigation and increased financial burden in some cases.

### **10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The Council is committed to providing appropriate accommodation and support for older people that meets required standards. The Council is

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equally committed to working with residents during the change management process to minimise any impact on lifestyle the changes incur.

- 10.2 Tenants affected by the outcomes of this report may decide they no longer wish to reside in their current accommodation. The Council will need to prioritise their request for a move and increase front line services accordingly. A dedicated officer will be appointed to any tenant wishing to move to assist with practicalities.
- 10.3 Tenants wishing to remain in their current accommodation may have concerns about the effect any changes will have on their lifestyle. The Council will offer full support in an advisory capacity. This will form part of the change management programme.
- 10.4 Where the option of disposal is approved an enhanced change management procedure will apply. Tenants will be fully consulted regarding their options and a dedicated officer will be appointed to each tenant.
- 10.5 Reasonable costs of moving may be reimbursed, all applications will be considered.

**11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The Council must act in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, with particular reference to the amendment on 1 October 2004 (see legal implications)
- 11.2 An impact assessment has been carried out which has been attached as Appendix 10.

**12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

- 12.1 All orders for work issued to contractors will be tendered for on the open market within Standing order 46 Procurement guidelines. This will safeguard the Council's budgets and quality of work to the residents.
- 12.2 Further work is required to identify way forward in relation to disposal options where deemed appropriate and it is proposed that a further report will follow within twelve months.

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- 12.3 The Action Plan which is included as Appendix 3 recommends further consultation regarding the usage of communal areas. It is anticipated that in some schemes additional revenue could be generated if communal areas were converted into dwellings for rental.

**13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

Property inspections carried out have identified where sensor lighting and upgraded heating systems are required. The installations of energy saving lighting and heating systems to the schemes will reduce running costs and reduce harmful CO2 emissions whilst keeping our residents safe and warm.

**14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 The report seeks approval of the appointment of an Older Persons' Housing Liaison Officer for 12 months to manage the change management process.
- 14.2 There may be staff implications in respect of the Home Support Service as the Action Plan is implemented. The details of that will be brought back to Councillors for agreement in a further report.

**15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed changes will assist the Council to make better use of housing stock and reduce the time taken to re-let properties which will have an impact on its performance and increase the revenue to the Authority.

**16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

The Council, as is duty bound, has considered crime and disorder implications during consultation. Safety and security have featured in the measured standards and the possibility of increased anti-social behaviour has been discussed during consultation with tenants. Introductory tenancies and a review of the allocation procedure is proposed.

**17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 17.1 The Comprehensive Area Assessment highlighted inequalities in respect of the life expectancy of females, alcohol related hospital admissions and

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obese adults. The review of Older Persons' Housing and Support highlighted that preventing adverse health conditions that limit their independence is a key priority for older people in Redditch. Key actions in the Strategy which may contribute to addressing these inequalities are:

- i) Extension of the Home Support Service into the Private Sector so that the service can be accessed by all regardless of tenure;
- ii) Review the Home Support Service so that the support delivered has a greater emphasis on preventing adverse health conditions and maximising independence;
- iii) Review of the communal areas to examine the levels of communal involvement and identify where enhancements could be made to increase the level of activity and meet the priorities highlighted by older people.

**18. LESSONS LEARNT**

- 18.1 A planned consultation programme with full co-operation and support from residents has been essential to informing and influencing proposals.
- 18.2 Forming a residents group has proved to be successful in allowing mutual understanding to be formed between Officers and residents.
- 18.3 It was clear from consultation that some customers perceived the length of time that it took the Council to review Older Persons Services and agree the proposals to be too lengthy. In response Officers have agreed to produce some guidance which will draw together the methods found to work best regarding consultation, research and planning which can be used to assist the delivery of future projects

**19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Tenants, residents, councillors and staff have been consulted about the Older Persons Housing and Support Strategy and about the implementation of the Action Plan. Relevant partners and professional bodies were also invited to attend the conferences held. Officers have also consulted the Borough Tenants Panel, Neighbourhood groups and the Community Forum (see Appendix 1).

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**20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	No
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	No
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	Yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Resources	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No
Housing Advisory Panel	Yes

**21. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards.

**22. APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 Consultation Statistics
- Appendix 2 Proposed Revised Categories
- Appendix 3 Updated Action Plan
- Appendix 4 Schedule of Proposed Works and Costings
- Appendix 5 Draft Job Description for Older Persons' Housing Liaison Officer
- Appendix 6 Concessionary TV licences
- Appendix 7 Measured standards
- Appendix 8 Understanding the DDA 1995

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- Appendix 9 Right to buy legislation
- Appendix 10 Impact assessment
- Appendix 11 Waiting List Information
- Appendix 12 Chiltern House Floor Plan
- Appendix 13 Scheme Reports
- Appendix 14 Home Buy Scheme
- Appendix 15 Terms of Reference for My Home My Future My Choice Residents Group.
- Appendix 16 Change Management Process
- Appendix 17 Roxboro House Fire Risk Assessment
- Appendix 18 Statistical Information
- Appendix 19 Lifeline Upgrade Charges

**23. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- i) Feedback forms from 2009 / 2010 Consultation;
- ii) Minutes from 2009 / 2010 Consultation;
- iii) 2007 - My Home My Future My Choice Consultation Papers;
- iv) Older Person's Housing and Support Strategy Committee Report from 26 August 2010.

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