Executive

8th September 2010

REVIEW OF SHELTERED HOUSING

FEEDBACK FROM RESIDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Further to the decision of the Executive Committee on 28th July 2010 Officers wrote to all 1169 units of current sheltered accommodation to inform residents of the outcome of proposals further to the Review of Sheltered Housing. These letters were hand delivered during the week ending 6th August, 2010.

As the outcome of the proposals differed, several different notification letters were prepared and are attached as Appendices to the Executive Report. Separate meetings were held residents of Roxboro House, Auxerre House and Chiltern House as the impact of the outcome of these proposals were considered to be more complex, requiring a further degree of explanation and understanding.

The meetings were held at short notice due to the short amount of time between the meetings of the Executive Committee. An evening meeting was held at the Town Hall for those who could not make it during the day and contact details were offered for those who could not attend any of the meetings but wished to make some representation.

The Home Support Officers were briefed immediately and verbally offered information to residents ahead of the notification letters where they were visiting. In addition, posters were displayed in communal areas offering a week's notice of the intended meetings.

During one of the meetings some residents said they had not been aware of the consultation as they never visited the communal lounge, they did not receive the Home Support Service, they did not receive the local free newspapers and they had not received any of the 3 items sent by Royal Mail in September 2009, December 2009 or March 2010. In response to this the Council issued over 100 flyers and hand delivered these to all those properties who were no longer deemed suitable as Older Persons Housing to invite their feedback in case there had been other mail issues we had not been made aware of. Posters were also put in all communal areas inviting tenants to use a 'Comments Box'.

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Meeting to be held in the	For residents of:	Date/Time
main lounge at:		
01.11	NA ()	ath a
Chiltern House	Matchborough	Wednesday 4 th August 2.00pm
Malvern House	Headless Cross	Tuesday 10th August 1.00pm
Evesham Road	Headless Cross	Tuesday 10th August 2.15pm
Keats House	Headless Cross	Tuesday 10th August 3.30pm
Roxboro House	Mount Pleasant Mayfields	Wednesday 11th August 10.00am
Bentley Close	Southcrest	Wednesday 11th August 11.15am
Retreat Street	Astwood Bank Feckenham	Wednesday 11 th August 2.00pm
Fearnings Cottages	Crabbs Cross Oakenshaw	Wednesday 11 th August 3.15pm
Town Hall	All areas	Wednesday 11 th August 6pm
Bredon House	Greenlands Woodrow	Friday 13 th August 10.00am
Beoley Road	Town Centre Abbeydale Lakeside	Friday 13 th August 11.15am
Downsell House	Webheath Batchley	Friday 13th August 2.00pm
Mendip House	Church Hill Winyates	Friday 13 th August 3.15pm

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Residents Feedback Received since 28th July, 2010

1. Letter from Mr & Mrs Williams – Residents of Drayton Close and member of the "My Home, My Future, My Choice Residents Group"

With your strategy report almost ready for presentation to the main council we feel it appropriate to express our feelings on the sympathetic handling of the consultations with the residents of the schemes affected and the general public. Your team's efforts have been exhaustive and very patient in making sure every avenue has been kept open for information and comments from residents to be included. The residents group "My Home, My Future, My Choice" has opened our eyes to the fact that we can be included and have an input to our future with the council, and the continuance of this is very important to us and older tenants in general.

We look forward to learning the council's reaction to your presentation and the implementation of its proposed actions. Further we would be delighted to remain as active participants in the future planning and implementations of any ongoing strategies.

Thanks you for your team's clarity in presenting your aims and willingness to entertain any inputs from the group.

2. Letter from Mrs M Causer – An Owner Occupier from Crabbs Cross who is on the waiting list for Older Persons Housing and a member of the "My Home, My Future, My Choice Residents Group".

Having been with this group for the last six months, I would like to make my views known to you.

As a group we have discussed and explored all aspects of the above, and have given our views which have been listened to with respect and patience. The issues involved are complete and varied and Sharon Powell has endeavoured to source many people to the group, who gave us more insight into our discussion and decisions.

The meetings are well constructed and we are made to feel we are making contribution to the decision to be made in the future. I agreed to be part of the residents group, as a prospective tenant on the waiting list, I wanted to understand how Tenancy works and, if my hope for accommodation in my 60s would be geared to future needs i.e. 2026.

I feel optimistic the Council will look closely at the needs of tenants given that the population of aged 65 or over will be 1 in 4 over the next 20 years, this situation needs to be tackled now, and councils need to rise to the challenge this presents to our area.

3. Letter from Mr & Mrs Kearney of Manor House Astwood Bank

My wife and I are very disappointed that Manor House will be put up for General let, because we have had a taste of unpleasantness in the past. You stated at the meeting in Retreat Street on the 11thAugust that you will be mindful of the age group, for Manor House in the future. That is of some comfort to us. Since we no longer have the security of Sheltered accommodation.

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4. Letter from Mrs Hartles of Bentley Close

At our meeting on the 11th August 2010, I said 'how happy I had been since moving to Bentley Close, and you asked me to put my comments in a letter and send it to you.

I moved into Bentley Close, nine years ago, and at that time, was feeling very isolated and depressed, and felt that I had nothing to look forward to. Things changed however, due to the friendly advise and help of our Wardens, the many activities, such as parties, coffee mornings, keep fit and much more, plus being among pleasant people of my own age group I do not think that I would ever want to move from Bentley Close and hope that our Council will do their best to keep our close the way it is now.

5. Letter from Mr Hadley of Auxerre House

As you suggested at the last consultation meeting, I am writing to put my thoughts to your Council in time for the meeting of the Executive Committee on 8th September.

It seems to me that as the Council has apparently set their mind on changing the Auxerre House from Category C to general lettings, the only option is which of the two options recommended by the Executive Committee on July 28th is decided upon. At the first meeting at Auxerre House the officers put forward only the second option, and stated they would be taking a sensitive approach to the choosing of tenants under the revised arrangements. Tenants here were concerned that the lettings would mirror the history of the present general lettings side where it was felt that a deterioration had taken place over the last couple of years or so, and were pleased to note the Officers undertaking above. However should your Council decide on the first option (the Homebuy Scheme) it would appear that the above safeguards would be difficult to apply.

Is it possible to let me have a summary of this scheme? In the meantime could you pass my views on to the members of the Executive Committee in time for their 8th September meeting.

(A copy of the Homebuy scheme has been sent to Mr Hadley).

6. E-mail from Maike

I received the notes about the Sheltered Housing Stock, on Thursday 5th, too late to go to the Matchborough Meeting anyway.

I am concerned about the way that this will affect us in the bungalows. I am classed as 'Category A Bungalows'. I notice that you can class these as – "also suitable for adults aged 18 years old and over with severe mobility issues or wheelchair users." This is all very well but you may not realise how much noise permeates from one bungalow to the next here. Someone with severe mobility issues would have carers coming at all hours, and would also, being young, like to listen to music and have friends in. I feel the noise level would be very disturbing for an older resident like myself or my neighbours.

The Council has already put young people almost next door to us, with youngsters tearing around on bicycles, and parents having loud parties and friends around. Integration is all very well but some consideration should be given to the people already in the area, so that a

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happy atmosphere can be maintained. I am not objecting to people having fun and "living", I am just wondering why a little more thought cannot be put into the wellbeing of the rest of the neighbourhood.

7. Letter from Evesham Road Residents 170a – 190b

On behalf of the tenants from number 170A to 190B we would just like to say THANK YOU for the hard work you have done for us recently, it is very much appreciated.

It is great to know that this scheme will be 'Category B' for age 60 plus and again thank you from us

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<u>Comments received from the Tenants meetings held during 4th August 10 – 13th August 2010</u>

Chiltern House

Proposal:

 Not suitable to be retained as Sheltered Housing for Older People (category D). The scheme already has a mixed tenure.

Tenants Response:

• Tenants felt the scheme could have been kept as suitable for 50 +

Main Queries:

- Q. Will new tenancy agreements be issued?
- A. No, because tenants are already secure tenants. Letters will be sent to all tenants advising them of the new category of the scheme.
- Q. What are the criteria for the local lettings plan? Will it be different for people living at Chiltern House?
- A. Local letting plans will be individual to each scheme, e.g. an age limit could be put in place start the plan, also it stipulate any the new tenants to have no dependents. These plans will be reviewed regularly on an annual basis. Lettings to be carried out sensitively to take into account different lifestyles. Councillor Brunner said by having local lettings plans will give tenants more say.
- Q. Will the tenants still have concessionary T.V. licences.
- A. If tenants are on the concessionary T.V licence at present, and still qualify, they will still receive it. Preserved rights still apply.
- Q. Is the communal lounge going to change or be used for anything else.
- A. A further consultation will be carried out to identify the usage of the Communal lounges in the schemes.
- Q. What will be the criteria between now and April 11
- A. Nothing will change until April 11 if the proposals are agreed.
- Q Do we have to move
- A. No, no one is going to make anyone move unless they wish to. We will work with tenants to help them through this process

Mike Chawner (Chair of Borough Tenants Panel) felt the overall strategy was very good and tenants should take on board what is being said. To get their thoughts together and identify what they would like to go into the local lettings plan, think about what is important to them.

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Malvern House

Proposal:

• To keep the scheme for 60+ with or without a support need (category B). This category has the potential to have a lift put in, but will require financial input.

Tenants Response:

 Tenants were very pleased with this decision. Tenants felt the letters they had received were self explanatory.

Main Queries:

None

Evesham Road Flats

Proposal:

- Numbers 170a 190b to be kept for 60+ with or without support need (category B)
- Numbers 124, 130,134, 144-156a to be for 50+ (category C)

Tenants Response:

Tenants were pleased with the recommendation; they feel they have received enough consultation, with letters, notices on the notice boards, conferences. They said a lot of people become complacent and do not want to attend meetings.

Main Queries:

None

Feckenham Road flats

Proposal:

 Not suitable to be retained as Sheltered Housing for Older People (category D). There are tenants under the age of 60 in the properties already.

Tenants Response:

Only one tenant attended see comment below.

Main Queries:

- Q One tenant said we were taking away their independence.
- A. It was explained to him, that we would put in local lettings plans with the tenants being involved in this process.

Keats House

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Proposal:

Suitable for persons 60+ with or without a support need (category B).

Tenants Response:

The tenants at Keats House were pleased with this recommendation; they understand why
they were put into this category and not in category A. They appreciate that lifts can't be put
into these properties. Upstairs tenants, at the meeting, are quite happy living there, they do
not want to move down to a lower floor.

Main Queries:

- Q Could prospective tenants be asked if they would like to be involved in the social activities?
- A. New tenants can be advised of the social activities, but it will be their decision if they take part in them

Roxboro House

Proposal:

- Not suitable to be retained as housing for Older people (category D).
- There are four options to be considered for Roxboro House
 - Disposal
 - o Other affordable providers
 - Council retention general let
 - Council retention over 50+

Tenants Response:

• They had a meeting on 23rd July 2010 to discuss possible proposals, so they were more accepting that there would be a change, and raised the guestions below

Sharon raised an awareness of some preliminary inquires she had made regarding compensation, if the optional of disposal is accepted. There may be some financial help, this would not be implemented until an official decision had been reached and the building had been sold.

Main Queries:

- Q Are all of the other Sheltered Schemes safe.
- A. Three of the other sheltered schemes are being kept as Sheltered housing for over 60 with a support need, others will be changed to older person housing 60+, or suitable for 50+. The others will be general lettings accommodation.
- Q Will sheltered housing still be offered to tenants?
- A Yes, if that is what they require and meet the criteria.
- Q. Is there a possibility I will still be sitting in my flat in 12 months time.

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- A. Yes, there is a possibility; you will still be in your own flat in twelve months. The proposal asks that officers be allowed to undertake a feasibility study on the four proposals and take a report back to Councillors within twelve months of the report.
- Q. Will the flats be re-let from now on?
- A. Until a decision is made we have got to look at the cost of leaving it empty. If we move someone in we will have to let them know of the proposals, because of the period of uncertainty.
- Q. How many councillors attend the meeting when the decisions are made?
- A. At the Executive committee there are 2 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrate, and 6 Conservative Councillors, and at full committee all of the Councillors should attend.
- Q. If kept as over 50s+ can we apply to move now?
- A. If you want to move now you can, you will go through the normal choice based letting system.
- Q. If it went to the open age group option would the compensation still apply, some tenants may feel they want to move?
- A. No, the criteria for compensation would be 'if you loose your home through development'. We would look at a local letting plan to address any issues that may arise through the change of age.

Bentley Close

Proposal:

Suitable for persons 60+ with or without a support need (category B).

Tenants Response:

 Tenants were very happy with this proposal for their scheme. The tenants felt they had been listened too; they had been gearing their selves up for a fight, against the category they thought they may be put in.

Main Queries:

- Q. Isn't the government bringing in proposals that tenants will have to move from their homes if they under occupy.
- A. This policy will have to be approved through Parliament first before it affects Local councils.
- Q. Will there be any foreseen alterations to the allocation process?
- A. Category A Sheltered schemes will have a different process, because they will need to meet support criteria. Category B tenants, we will try to have a regard for differences in lifestyles. Advertising the properties correctly, we hope will encourage similar type of tenants into the schemes. Individuals have the right to accept these properties; we can't enforce them to take part in any of the scheme activities.

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- Q. At present do we have a waiting list for tenants over 60 wanting to move to Bentley Close, and, if no one over 60 applies, are we going to put in other age groups?
- A. No, we do not hold a waiting list for Bentley Close or any other schemes; they all go through the choice based letting system. If no one applies on the first advertisement we will advertise again until we get someone suitable. The scheme is usually well sort after. If it happens on a regular basis we will have to keep an eye on the demand, and look at whether we need to do anything about the situation.
- Q. Would there be a flagging sign to raise awareness if a scheme needed to be recategorised?
- A. What we would look at is the demand for the properties and the demand for the Home Support service. Look at it annually but not necessarily change anything.

One of the tenants said she was very happy with the decision, since she moved into the scheme she is a different person. It is a pleasure to live there, there is a good community spirit and the Home Support officer is a major factor in this community spirit.

Retreat Street, and Gorsey Close flats

Proposal:

Suitable for persons aged 50+ (category C)

Tenants Response:

Tenants were OK with this decision; there are some tenants under 50+ living in these properties.

Tenants feed back would be welcome and will take this back to the Councillors.

Main Queries:

- Q. Is it possible to have Right to buy if this proposal is accepted?
- A. Yes, right to buy would apply. Although, we have had no one put in a right to buy on any of the schemes that are 50+ at present.
- Q. Will priority be given to anyone in an upstairs flat who wishes to come into downstairs flat?
- A. Yes this will be put on the adverts.
- Q. Why has the upgrade of the communal kitchen in Gorsey Close been deferred?
- A We will be consulting on the use of communal rooms in the schemes once this report has been approved.
- Q. Will we still have a cleaner?
- A. Yes the cleaning contract will still cover the communal areas.

It was felt an amenities list would be useful to tell to prospective tenants what was in the area.

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Manor House

Proposal:

Not suitable to be retained as Older Persons accommodation (category D).

Tenants Response:

The tenants at the meeting were not happy about this proposal. It is only one block of flats with eight flats in it. The tenants who live there do a lot of the gardening and take pride in the scheme. There is access for wheelchairs users on the ground floor, they have had tenants who have been wheelchair users living in these flats previously. Tenants felt younger people would have cars and there is very limited parking around this scheme.

It was explained a local letting plan would be put in place with consultation with the tenants.

Feedback needs to be constructive with comments, to change the decision.

Tenants said,' what was the use of giving feedback if the council did not take any notice'

Tenants said they were aware of the strategy and had attended meeting and conferences.

Main Queries:

None

Leacroft Road

Proposal:

Not suitable to be retained as Older Persons accommodation (category D).

Tenants Response:

• The tenants from these two blocks of flats were not in agreement with the proposed change of category. They felt they should be in Category C, over 50+, because there are a lot of tenants in this age group already living in these properties. These tenants tend to look out for the older tenants. They did not want to have children living above them. Within the vicinity of these flats there are private residents who like the quietness of the area. Younger people would create more problems with the already limited parking spaces.

It was explained a local lettings plan would be put in place in consultation with the tenants.

These tenants said they had not received any information about the strategy, prior to the last letters advising of this meeting.

Main Queries:

- Q If I wanted to move to a bungalow would I have higher priority?
- A. It may be better to have a medical report this would put you into higher banding.

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Meeting held at Town Hall

This was an open meeting for all scheme tenants. Of those who attended, one lived in Harry Taylor House and one lived in Arthur Jobson House, both of these schemes will be kept as Sheltered Housing for over 65's with a support need.

The others lived in Loxley Close which is proposed to go to general let accommodation, with a local lettings plan; this was explained to these tenants.

Main Queries:

- Q. Is Harry Taylor being taken over by another Housing provider?
- A. No, it will remain RBC property and will continue to be Sheltered Housing.
- Q. If the Councillors say no to Harry Taylor remaining has sheltered Housing, what will happen then?
- A. The Councillors have already accepted the report in principle, but asked the project group to notify the tenants what their categories will be, and give feedback and comments from the tenants at the next meeting in September.

The tenants were advised there is a change management process that will be carried out when the decisions are made, part of this process will be a dedicated officer to work with any tenants who have concerns or who want to move

The tenants in attendance were asked what the best way to communicate with them was; they all said letters through the door is best.

Bredon House

Attended by tenants from Bredon House, Auxerre House and Fladbury Close

Proposal:

- Bredon House ~ Suitable for person's aged 50+ (category C)
- Auxerre House ~ Considered not suitable as Older Person's Accommodation (category D)
- Fladbury Close ~ Suitable for persons 60+ with or without a support need (category A)

Tenants Response:

- Tenants from Bredon House pleased with the decision.
- Tenants from Auxerre House initially against decision however by the end of the meeting understood the logic of the proposal.
- Tenants from Fladbury Close pleased with the decision.

Main Queries:

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- Q Why is the Council disowning the elderly? It is disgraceful that we are doing this? (Query from Auxerre House tenant).
- A Explained that some accommodation that is currently used to house the elderly is not suitable for their needs and are not DDA compliant and as such should not be advertised as older person's housing. By reviewing the housing stock currently in place for older people the Council want to ensure that all accommodation deemed suitable for older people is suitable or where possible made suitable.
- Q What meetings have we had? We have not been consulted until now. (Query from Auxerre House tenant).
- A All consultation taken place from September 2009 to date was listed.
- Q Why is Auxerre House not suitable for older persons? (Query from Auxerre House tenant).
- A Explained how having general needs and older person's housing so close is not working for many of the older tenants especially as they all use the same entrance door. The older residents can feel intimidated. Person raising the question felt balance was right, however another tenant had moved from Auxerre House as had the opposite experience.
- Q Query rose regarding fire escapes in Fladbury Close as there is no back door to the property.
- A This will be looked into.
- Q In Bredon House it is difficult to get through the doors in a wheelchair. Would it be possible to have the doors on a device whereby they stay open however in case of a fire they close?
- A We will look into fire escapes and general access around the buildings.
- Q Bredon House is on a slope and which can be difficult to negotiate in the winter. The tile have been replace but not with the promise 'non-slip' tiles.
- A Cllr Clayton said that when it is icy the Council have agreed to enhance the gritting provided by Worcestershire County Council at all the schemes.
- Q Will we still be able to have the Home Support Service and Lifeline?
- A All tenants of RBC will be able to, and can access these services, regardless of whether they live in accommodation designated for older persons provided they have a need for the service.
- Q General comment about Home Support Service and that they felt he received a poor service when he had to pay for it. Now it is optional he is not in receipt of it as we have assed him as having no need.
- A Explained how the supporting people grant has changed from an accommodation based grant to a needs led grant. If he feels he does have a need he can ask for an assessment at any point.
- Q Query regarding bins at Auxerre House
- A This has been resolved. We will look at putting notices on the bins.

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- Q Regarding progress on kitchens and bathrooms and both Bredon House and Arthur Jobson House. What year of programme are they in? Are they being done or have they been put on hold. It was felt that tenants would benefit from having a notice on the notice board regarding the capital works programme.
- A Capital works have not been put on hold. We will take suggestion regarding the notice board forward.

Beoley Road

Attended by tenants from St. Georges, Phillips Terrace, Harry Taylor House and Beoley Road

Proposal:

- St Georges ~ Not suitable for older persons housing (category D)
- Philips Terrace ~ Suitable for persons aged 50+ (category C)
- Harry Taylor House ~ Older Person's Supported Housing (category A) over)
- Beoley Road ~ Suitable for persons aged 50+ (category C)

Tenants Response:

- All except St Georges were pleased with the decision for their scheme.
- St Georges gueried but understood rationale

Main Queries:

- Q Will ages but reduced straight away?
- A No a local letting plans agreed with current tenants will be implemented. This would see the age limit reduce gradually.
- Q I would like to move to a bungalow but am in Harry Taylor, can I still apply?
- A Yes, explained that they would need to complete an application and could bid for properties. If they do not have access to the internet a member of housing options can place the bid for them.

Downsell House

Proposal:

Suitable for persons aged 50+ (category C)

Tenants Response:

- The tenants were O.K with the recommendation; there are already a lot of tenants under the age of 60 living in this scheme. There have not been any problems the younger tenants tend to ask the older ones if they require shopping etc.
- The tenants raised concerns about the ongoing parking problems around the scheme, especially during school time. Cllr Clayton felt a letter could be put on the cars advising them

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they were parking incorrectly especially by the dropped Kerb. The dropped kerb may need to be re-sited and marked more clearly.

Mendip House

Proposal:

Suitable for persons aged 60+ with or without a support need (category B).

Tenants Response:

Tenants from Mendip House were pleased with the decision for their scheme.

It was explained, at the present time a lift cannot be put into Mendip House but if any money was available, in the future, a lift could be put in.

Preference would be given to tenants in upstairs flats wishing to move downstairs in the scheme.

Main Queries:

- Q Are RBC building any more properties, it seems these are being taken off the elderly, will they be replaced,
- A. There is a local Plan 2026 which RBC can designate pieces of land which will allow the building the building of houses. RBC can say what they feel should be built on these sites.
- Q. If people want to move out of Mendip can they?
- A. Normal transfer process will apply through choice base lettings.
- Q Once this strategy becomes in to being can we be categorically assured no one under 60 will move in.
- A. The categories will be reviewed on an annual basis to make sure we have got it right, either way. If it needs to be changed tenants will be consulted first.

Loxley Close and Sandhurst Close flats

Proposal:

Not suitable for as Older persons' accommodation (category D)

Tenants Response:

- There were concerns from the tenants of Loxley Close and Sandhurst Close flats, with the change of use, to general let properties. It was explained to the tenants there would be a local lettings plans with each of these schemes, this will be carried out with tenant consultation.
- Q. What age group will be put in?

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- A. Introduce a local lettings plan; this will be discussed with the tenants on what they want to go into it e.g. start at 50+ with no dependents to be reviewed annually.
- Q. Will we have to move, the Loxley close flats are close to all amenities.
- A. No we are not asking anyone to move, but they can apply to if they want to.
- Q. Can the tenants of Loxley and Churchill schemes still use Mendip House?
- A Yes, there will be no change.
- Q When will it start?
- A. Full council meet on 20th September 10 when a decision should be made. There will be no change to the service received at present such as Lifeline, Home Support Service.
- Q. Can we buy our flats if they go to general let?
- A. Yes the right to buy will apply.
- Q What happens if you have trouble with noisy neighbours?
- A. The normal tenancies conditions apply. If tenants are causing a nuisance they can be reported to the Anti Social behaviour team.
- Q. Why are the flats in Loxley Close not suitable for over 65s'
- A. Into the future we would not be looking to keep these flats for older people.

Deans Close, Chedworth, Fulbrook and Flanders Close bungalows.

Proposed:

- Deans Close ~ Older Person's Supported Housing (category A)
- Chedworth ~ Older Person's Supported Housing (category A)
- Fulbrook Close ~ Older Person's Supported Housing (category A)
- Flanders Close ~ Older Person's Supported Housing (category A)

Tenants Response:

Carol what was the general feeling?

- Q. Bungalows in Chedworth Close have younger people in them
- A. If the person has a severe disability or in a wheelchair they can apply for this type of accommodation.

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