

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE

19 JUNE 2013

FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

Cabinet (Housing) Committee 29 June 2011 - CAB2196(HSG) Supported Housing Priorities & Emerging Issues

Cabinet (Housing) Committee 6 December 2011 – CAB2264(HSG) Review Of Sheltered Housing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report deals with the Council's contract with Hampshire County Council to provide support services to older people in Winchester District. The Council was awarded a three year contract which commenced 1 April 2012 and expires 31 March 2015. It is a requirement of the contract that the Council provides appropriate services for older people across all tenures, and not just within WCC housing stock. It also requires that services are delivered in accordance to an assessed need, rather than across the board to anyone based on their address. The County Supporting People team have notified officers that the existing contract will be cancelled unless the Council can demonstrate that it intends to offer support to older people across all tenures and has robust systems in place to ensure this happens. Officers need to report back progress to the County Council next month and the adoption by this Committee of the suggested approach will demonstrate that the Council is committed to making the required changes.

This report explains the suggested approach to offer the floating support service required to retain the contract, along with an enhanced housing management service to ensure the Council is able to meet the needs of tenants living in sheltered housing schemes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:That it is recommended that:

- 1 Officers be authorised to proceed with consultation with existing sheltered tenants over proposed revisions to the way support services are delivered.
- 2 Officers arrange an informal meeting between the Chairman of the Committee and representatives of TACT and the Sheltered Housing Scrutiny Group to discuss the implications of these service revisions upon existing tenants.
- 3 Subject to the outcome of the consultation, Committee approves the establishment by the Council of a floating support service for older people in Winchester District to work across all tenures.
- 4 Subject to the outcome of the consultation, a small pilot sheltered housing management team be established to provide services to all tenants in sheltered housing.

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The support provided to older people living in sheltered housing is funded by Hampshire County Council through the Supporting People programme. The current contract is for a period of three years which commenced on 1 April 2012 and runs through to 31 March 2015.
- 1.2 The contract is the only contract in Winchester District for the support of older people, and Hampshire County Council therefore requires that the service should be available to all older people, irrespective of tenure (i.e. not just within WCC housing stock). It also requires that services are delivered in accordance to an assessed need, rather than across the board to anyone based on their address.
- 1.3 Following a strategic review of older persons' services by Hampshire County Council, the City Council undertook a restructure of the sheltered housing staffing arrangements in August 2009. This resulted in scheme managers being phased out and a new model of community support hubs being introduced. This was followed in December 2011 by an internal review of the Council's sheltered housing stock, which saw 304 'hard to let' properties being declassified as sheltered and made available for general needs housing
- 1.4 Currently, the support service is included as a condition of tenancy for all sheltered scheme tenants, and the charge is universally applied, regardless of whether the tenants want or needs the service. The capacity of the older persons' support service is limited to 850 clients, and Hampshire County Council, as commissioners of the service, are therefore anxious to ensure that it should be targeted at those people who need it most.
- 1.5 This report sets out the suggested approach to enable the Council to retain its contract with Hampshire County Council to offer support to older people across the District. It also outlines proposals for an enhanced housing management service to ensure that the needs and expectations of the tenants who live in the City Council's sheltered housing schemes can continue to be met.

2 THE CURRENT SERVICE

- 2.1 The support service currently offered by the Council is delivered mainly to the Council's own tenants. It has emerged from the former Sheltered Scheme Manager service and the previous and current changes made to the service reflect the requirements of the national Supporting

People agenda. The current contract allows for 425 hours per week of support, to be delivered to 850 clients. The service operates in three community hubs with each team covering a defined geographical area.

- 2.2 Although the contract requires that the service should be delivered across all tenures and to those in need of the support offered, it is currently linked to the address where the service user lives. Consequently, the majority of tenants in sheltered housing are required to sign up to the support service, even if they do not wish or need to make use of it.
- 2.3 Every tenant who receives support has a Needs Assessment and Support Plan which is regularly reviewed and against which progress towards greater independence is measured. Whilst it is recognised by the Supporting People team that it is unrealistic in many cases to expect older people to regain sufficient independence that they no longer have need of the support service, this process offers a useful means by which service outcomes can be agreed.

3 THE CASE FOR A CROSS-TENURE FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICE

- 3.1 Recent discussions with officers from Hampshire County Council have made it clear that the City Council needs to refocus its support service for older people, if the Council is to retain the contract with the County Council. The annual contract value is approximately £321,500 per annum and is vital in helping to meet the costs of delivering this essential service.
- 3.2 There is a growing need for support services across the District, but this need does not necessarily correlate with the needs demonstrated by the Council's own sheltered housing tenants. The sheltered housing population is to some extent reflecting wider demographic trends, in that the Council's sheltered tenants increasingly are active and able-bodied, with a significant number continuing to go out to work.
- 3.3 In contrast with this, the District continues to see a gradual ageing of the general population, with a greater proportion of older people continuing to live at home despite, in many cases, failing health, reduced mobility and greater need for support services. Given the limited resources available, the County Council needs to achieve the best possible value for money from commissioned services and needs to be confident that those who are in the greatest need have can access the support service they need.
- 3.4 The move to a community support hub model was intended to facilitate cross-tenure working. However, although it was helpful in encouraging the staff team to develop new ways of working, the approach failed to deliver a means by which owner-occupiers and tenants of other social or private landlords could access the service. Consequently, the further changes proposed in this report are now required in order for the Council to retain the contract.

- 3.5 The alternative to the proposed reshaping of the service is that the Council could decide to surrender the contract. However, officers feel this is undesirable for a number of reasons:
- 3.5.1 By providing the support services itself, the Council is able to ensure that those sheltered scheme tenants who need support will continue to receive a comprehensive package of services from a single provider. It will also avoid the complexities of providing access and setting up agreements with an alternative support provider.
 - 3.5.2 By surrendering the contract, the jobs of the existing staff team would be placed at risk, since it is arguable whether the current working practices would offer protection to staff under TUPE provisions.
 - 3.5.3 Whilst the City Council will need to revise its current operating practices, it is well-placed to deliver the requirements of the support contract. Withdrawal from the contract would leave Hampshire County Council with the expensive and time-consuming task of setting up a tender and agreeing terms with a new provider.
 - 3.5.4 Tenant satisfaction levels amongst the Council's sheltered housing tenants remain very high, with 97% of sheltered tenants expressing satisfaction with the services provided by the Council in the recent Tenant satisfaction Survey. This will form a key part of a consultation with tenants concerning these proposals, but officers believe that the majority of tenants would prefer the Council to remain as the provider of the support service.

4 THE PROPOSED SERVICE

- 4.1 Floating Support Service. The staff team are already required to undertake home visits and carry out support tasks for clients living in their own homes. It is proposed that the service be revised to focus exclusively on the floating support role and end the remaining ties between staff members and specific sheltered schemes. It is likely that the service will continue to operate on a geographic hub model, with separate teams covering the Winchester City area, Southern Parishes and Northern / Eastern Parishes. Referrals will be sought on behalf of older people in need of support in all forms of tenure. The Floating Support Team will have no role in providing housing management services for sheltered schemes.
- 4.2 Enhanced Housing Management Service. Tenants living in the Council's eleven traditional sheltered housing schemes will benefit from the provision of a small specialist team of officers who will offer a tailored housing management service exclusively for sheltered housing. It is proposed, for the purposes of the pilot scheme at least, that this team will comprise 2.5 FTE posts.
- 4.3 At this stage, it is proposed to retain the Community Alarm Responding service in its current form, with two teams, one based in the City and

another in the south of the District. However, it has been agreed with the staff team that this will need to be kept under review.

5 STAFF CONSULTATION

- 5.1 A number of consultation events have taken place with the staff team to discuss the proposals for the future of the service. Two of these events have been attended by a representative of the Trade Union and Human Resources have also been involved in the process.
- 5.2 There have been some anxieties expressed by staff members about working with service users who are not Council tenants, and some concerns over how the Council can best ensure existing sheltered tenants do not 'lose out' because of the proposed changes. In general terms though, the staff team has been supportive of the suggested way forward. The proposal to trial the new approach has generally been welcomed, as it allows staff and managers to start operating the revised approach and gauge what adjustments may be needed to maximise effectiveness. It also allows staff members to try one of the roles before making a long-term commitment to a specific job.

6 TENANT CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The proposed service changes are being presented to the Sheltered Scrutiny Group Open Forum on 17 June 2013, with a follow-up information briefing to be sent to all sheltered tenants (subject to adoption of the recommendations contained in this report). The information briefing will include a tear-off slip to enable tenants to raise queries and concerns. These will be compiled into a set of 'Frequently Asked Questions' so that the answers can then be circulated back to all sheltered tenants.
- 6.2 The consultation process will allow the Council to advise tenants of the proposed changes, invite their feedback and provide answers to the issues raised.
- 6.3 In addition it is recommended that officers arrange an informal meeting between the Chairman of this committee and representatives of TACT and the Sheltered Housing Scrutiny Group to discuss the implications of these service revisions upon existing tenants.

7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The proposed changes in service have been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment which will have been presented to the validation panel prior to the date of the Committee meeting.
- 7.2 The Assessment considered the impact of the proposed changes on current and prospective service users across the different equality strands and highlighted the need to promote accessibility to the floating support service for all clients. It was noted that the extension of support to older people in a range of tenures is likely to expand the reach of the service and help ensure it is more effectively targeted at those who need it most.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:8 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS
(RELEVANCE TO):

- 8.1 The provision of a cross-tenure floating support service supports the priorities and objectives set out in the Community Strategy and the Council's Change Plans. In particular, it will promote a number of aspects of Inclusive Society

9 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 9.1 The cost of the support service for all customers will be met either by the service user themselves, or through the receipt of Supporting People Grant from Hampshire County Council (where this is payable for eligible individuals). The proposed floating support service should not impact therefore upon either the Housing Revenue Account or General Fund
- 9.2 The re-focussing of the service on a floating support model will not incur any additional resources during the pilot phase as it will utilise the existing staff team with no growth. However, one of the key learning objectives of the pilot is to determine whether the Council is able to adequately meet the demands of the Supporting People contract within current resources.
- 9.3 Within the pilot, officers will have the opportunity to gauge the level of demand on resources from the core support service and what capacity will exist within this team to continue to deliver ancillary services, including sending a support worker out in response to alarm calls and assessment, installation and maintenance of Lifeline alarms and telecare equipment.
- 9.4 Service charges payable by tenants in sheltered housing will be reviewed and may need to change to reflect the fact that the role of Older Persons Support Officer will be discontinued, and enhanced housing management services will be provided by a separate dedicated team. Service charges are based on actual costs of the service and if staff members are spending less time on schemes, the charge will need to be adjusted. However, no immediate changes will be made and the charges reviewed after 6 months.

10 TACT COMMENT

- 10.1 TACT notes the proposals and accepts the requirement to amend the existing service is unavoidable if the Council wishes to keep its Supporting People contract with Hampshire.
- 10.2 It is clear that residents will have very real and genuine concerns about losing dedicated site based staff and it is crucial that care is taken to explain this in detail to tenants.
- 10.3 The option to "opt out" of paying support will be attractive to some. Those in receipt of housing benefit may not agree. However, the principle of providing support only to those who need it is reasonable.

- 10.4 TACT is also concerned for those tenants assessed as not requiring support but who would like to retain a support service for the reassurance it offers. The Council is requested to give careful consideration as to how these tenants can be supported in the future.