
Meeting: Executive
Date: 10 November 2009
Subject: Wingfield Court -Ampthill
Report of: Cllr Tom Nicols, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development
Summary: The report proposes that Central Bedfordshire Council provide capital funding to Aragon Housing Association, up to £175k, to undertake the conversion of an existing sheltered scheme to Extra Care Housing.

Advising Officer: Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities
Contact Officer: Graham Blair, Head of Housing Strategy and Community
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: Ampthill
Function of: Executive
Key Decision Yes
**Reason for urgency/
exemption from call-in
(if appropriate)** To ensure that the Council has a robust and deliverable Capital Programme.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The proposal directly supports two of the Council's five priorities, namely 'supporting and caring for an ageing population' and 'promoting healthier lifestyles'.

Financial:

The Council has £2,445,200 in the approved capital programme for funding affordable housing in 2009/10. This represents schemes previously approved by Mid Beds Council. Elsewhere on the agenda, the Director of Corporate Resources is reporting on the Capital programme and this incorporates a reduction in this amount to £1,604,000 reflecting scheme slippage, given the current housing market, as well successful bids for substitute funding to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The revised budget incorporates the costs of the proposal outlined in this report, which has been approved for submission to Executive by the officer Corporate Asset Management Group (CAMG).

Legal:

The Council has no duty to fund this proposal and all council funding for affordable housing is carried out under discretionary powers.

Risk Management:

The risks are assessed as low, given the scheme is owned and managed by Aragon HA.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

No implications.

Equalities/Human Rights:

The proposal is specific to a particular group i.e. the elderly and the needs are evidenced in numerous national and local strategies and policies.

Community Safety:

No implications.

Sustainability:

The proposal is intended to make improved use of an existing facility that is currently underused.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Executive approve funding of up to £175k, from the approved Affordable housing capital budget, to Aragon HA to fund the conversion of Wingfield Court to Extra Care type housing

Reason for Recommendation(s): Aragon HA is unable to access other public funding to enable this project to proceed. The proposal is very much in line with the Council's objectives.

Background

1. Attached as an appendix is the Project Initiation Document (PID) considered by the officer group, CAMG. This contains more detail.
2. Wingfield Court is a sheltered housing scheme owned and managed by Aragon HA. In 2003 an extra wing was added in partnership with the, then PCT with the aim of providing an intermediate care facility. Unfortunately, the PCT were never able to use the facility and over the last few years the wing has been used for temporary re-housing.
3. Aragon's Board have considered options and concluded the best way forward would be to convert the whole scheme into 'Extra Care' Housing. Extra Care housing allows vulnerable elderly people to access much needed services on site, whilst allowing them to retain a large degree of independence.

Meeting strategic objectives

4. The proposal is in line with the strategic direction outlined in both the former Bedfordshire County Council's, 'Older Persons Strategy and the 'Supporting People Strategy' both broadly supported by all the former District councils. The concept of Extra Care forms a key service provision in the Governments 'National Strategy for an Ageing Society'-2008 and will form a key element in Central Bedfordshire's 'Older Persons Strategy' and be promoted in the revised Housing Strategy. There is currently a shortfall in Extra facilities across Bedfordshire. The proposal is effectively jointly presented from the Directors of Sustainable Communities and Social Care, Health & Housing.
5. The approved capital budget includes funding to support affordable housing developments. In essence the criteria for allocating funds from this budget was developed to focus support on schemes meeting Council priorities and where other external funding was unlikely to be achieved. This proposal meets both criteria. Members will have the opportunity to re visit the funding criteria at Overview and Scrutiny and Executive, as part of considering a new Housing Strategy, next year.

Costs to the Council

6. The proposal involves funding Aragon HA to cover the costs of conversion of an existing scheme and allows for some uncertainty in the tendering process for the work. Most schemes funded from this capital budget involve new developments where costs are considerably higher. Aragon's proposal represents extremely good value for money.

Appendices:

Appendix A – (Project Initiation Document)

Background Papers: File 'Extra care Housing', GB. Bedfordshire County Council – 'Older Persons strategy' and Supporting People Strategy. Government –'National Strategy for an Ageing Society'

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands