
Meeting: Social Care Health and Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date: 1 August 2011
Subject: Review of housing for older people in the south of Central Bedfordshire
Report of: Julie Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
Summary: The report provides Members with a briefing on the Housing Service's rationale for the review of housing for older people in the south of Central Bedfordshire.

The report also provides an update on the progress to date on the consultation plans for Crescent Court Sheltered Scheme, Toddington and Croft Green Sheltered Scheme, Dunstable, which are the first two schemes to be covered by the review.

Contact Officer: Carol Rooker, Head of Housing Management
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

None identified as a result of this report

Financial:

There are costs associated with the consultation process. These are largely related to the production and circulation of a Housing Needs Survey (to identify future demand), consultation documents and hire of local halls for public meetings. An Independent Tenant Advisor has also been appointed on an interim basis to support the residents through the consultation process relating to the future of Crescent Court and Croft Green sheltered schemes.

Legal:

None identified as a result of this report

Risk Management:

There is a reputation risk to the council if we do not undertake full consultation with residents and stakeholders on the options for Crescent Court and Croft Green sheltered schemes.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None identified as a result of this report

Equalities/Human Rights:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been produced on the future of Crescent Court

Community Safety:

None identified as a result of this report

Sustainability:

N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Social Care Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the progress of the Review and the Consultation Plans for Crescent Court and Croft Green Sheltered Schemes.

2. Background Information

2.1 A review of Council housing for older people in the south of Central Bedfordshire is now underway. The purpose of the review is to inform current and future provision so that it responds to customer expectations, emerging trends in this field and our financial constraints.

2.2 Over the last few decades the housing needs of older people have changed. People are living longer and remaining healthier. Many want to retain their independence and stay in their own home for as long as possible, which has contributed to the decrease in demand for sheltered housing. As the main provider of social housing in the south of Central Bedfordshire, the Council wants to make sure it is planning to meet future needs in the right way. It also wants to make sure its current housing for older people is safe, secure and meets modern standards.

2.3 An important part of this review will be the views of current residents of our sheltered housing schemes and potential future residents. We will also be seeking the views of the local community, our health colleagues and other professionals involved in the support of older people.

2.4 Currently, Council housing for older people is provided through Sheltered Housing and Extra Care schemes and older person's bungalows. These are designed to meet the needs of older people who may need a little extra support to remain living independently. The schemes benefit from having an alarm service and assistance from Sheltered Housing Officers who make contact with residents on a regular basis. There are also older people who live in standard Council accommodation that has been adapted to help with mobility issues.

2.5 There are over 600 units of sheltered accommodation throughout the south area of Central Bedfordshire, many of which were built over thirty years ago. Sheltered housing of the type we currently provide is generally becoming less in demand as people live longer and have changing expectations of the type of housing they will live in as they age. Some of our schemes are still popular and easy to let to new tenants who may wish to down-size, live nearer relatives, or have older neighbours. However, a growing number of our sheltered schemes have begun to 'show their age' and do not meet modern space standards or the expectations of future residents. For these reasons, we are looking at how our

existing sheltered schemes can adapt to continue meeting needs now and into the future. We are also looking at different ways of supporting people to stay longer in their own homes.

3. Where are we now in the review

- 3.1 The first two sheltered schemes to be reviewed are Crescent Court in Toddington and Croft Green in the Beecroft area of Dunstable. Both schemes were built over forty years ago and have heating systems that are nearing the end of their useful life. Properties at both schemes are let through the Choice Based Lettings scheme. Whilst there are no problems in letting the bungalows at Croft Green and the ground floor flats at Crescent Court, the bedsits in both schemes often remain empty for long periods of time and successful bids are often from people outside of the area in a low 'banding'.
- 3.2 The review of Crescent Court is in the first phase of consultation. A public meeting and a residents meeting with family and friends were held in May and a Friends of Crescent Court Group has been set up. Members of the Group include Crescent Court and Toddington village residents and Parish Councillors. A number of options for the future of Crescent Court are now being developed including an option for the modernisation and extension of the building to provide extra care accommodation.
- 3.3 The review of Croft Green is also in the first phase of consultation and a residents meeting with family and friends was held in June. At that meeting it was confirmed with residents that only the bedsit block part of the scheme will be included in the review. This is due to the bungalows which form the remainder of the scheme being of a solid build and having sufficient space standards. During the summer individual heating systems will be installed in each bungalow.
- 3.4 As stated earlier, an important part of this review will be the views of current residents of our sheltered housing schemes and potential future residents. To this end a Consultation Plan has been developed for each scheme and an Independent Tenant Adviser has been appointed to provide residents with unbiased support and a conduit for their views and concerns
- 3.5 The Consultation Plans are attached as an **Appendix** to this report. A well attended public meeting was held in Toddington in May and residents meetings have been held at both schemes to discuss the Consultation Plan with residents and their family and friends.

4. Financial and other options

The costs relating to the Consultation Plans are largely related to the production and circulation of a survey and consultation documents and the hire of local halls for public meetings. There are also costs associated with the interim appointment of an Independent Tenant Advisor to support tenants through the consultation process.

5. Next steps

As stated earlier, both consultation plans are at Phase One and work is underway on a number of options for the future of both schemes. This work is

being informed by a range of available research on the housing needs of older people, likely future demand for both sheltered and extra care schemes and methods for providing support for people remaining at home.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Consultation Plan for Crescent Court Sheltered Scheme

Appendix B - Consultation Plan for Croft Green Sheltered Scheme

Background Papers:

None

Location of papers:

Not applicable