

URN: 21-043

Subject: Sheltered Housing Review

Report to: ELT 30 June 2021

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee 15 July 2021

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SUBJECT MATTER

This report sets out the scope of the review which will be undertaken in relation to the Council's sheltered housing provision.

RECOMMENDATION

That Committee:

Approve the approach to the sheltered housing service review set out in this report.

1.1 Introduction

This report sets out the scope of the review which will be undertaken of the Council's sheltered housing service. This report responds to the request from Full Council that Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee review the way the Sheltered Housing service is provided following the changes made in July 2017. It is important in conducting a review of the sheltered housing service to consider all of the lessons we have learnt as a result of the Covid pandemic and to reflect the ongoing need and demand for sheltered housing, to ensure the service meets current and future needs. A thorough review will ensure we deliver the most effective service for tenants moving forward.

2.1 Background

Great Yarmouth Borough Council currently owns, manages and provides sheltered housing support to 945 homes providing a service to 1076 tenants. Through our service we promote independent living, reducing the need for higher dependency services such as residential care or extra care.

Norfolk County Council (NCC) undertook a review of funding housing related support called Building Resilient Lives – Reshaping Housing Related Support in 2016. In response to the consultation and as a result of the findings they removed their funding for sheltered housing (Supporting People funding).

Following the period of review by NCC in 2016/17, GYBC considered the most viable service for our vulnerable tenants to deliver a scheme that would be eligible for Housing Benefit and support tenants'

needs. This resulted in a paper to Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee setting out the new service which resulted in Wardens (now called Tenancy Support Officers):

- Rotating between many sites to ensure tenant care was balanced.
- Not facilitating events in communal rooms.
- Emergency call outs actioned through support provided remotely by the Independent Living Services at Wherry Way.
- Undertaking contact with tenants on need rather than frequency basis.

The service prior to July 2017 involved patch Wardens visiting each home on a frequency basis from daily to monthly in accordance to each tenant's request and providing the support required. Each warden was at the heart of the local community facilitating communal room activities and delivering specific immediate welfare and care requirements. This service was paid for through service charges; Supporting People funding and eligible Housing Benefit.

2.2 Current Service provision

Sheltered Housing plays an important and fundamental role within Great Yarmouth Borough Council's wider Housing Service provision. It endorses the importance of tenants remaining independent in their homes and supporting them to sustain their tenancies. Tenants are supported with their health and wellbeing, through fostering a professional and open relationship with the team of Tenancy Support Officers through regular contacts/visits/actions. The service reacts to moments of crisis or concern, for example bereavement or moving home. Usage of communal rooms is now led by tenants and used for activities but this has resulted in some rooms being under used and some tenants not being involved. The service is delivered by 9 Tenancy Support Officers (7 full time equivalents), management of the team sits within the role of the Tenancy Team Manager. The service is now funded through a service charge to sheltered housing tenants. This is eligible for Housing Benefit with the HRA currently contributing 30% towards the cost.

2.3 COVID Pandemic

When the National Lockdown and COVID regulations were imposed by the Government in March 2020, we reviewed what we were able to deliver for our sheltered housing tenants whilst working from home and adhering to national guidance. We developed a welfare call service, contacting each tenant on a weekly basis to support them with issues and difficulties they were experiencing. Examples of support included arranging food and prescription deliveries and providing information on how to stay safe during the pandemic. This welfare call service provided an enhanced contact service during this critical period of time. Over time the frequency of contact on average has reduced from weekly calls to fortnightly. It is increased when required to resolve a concern or issue ensuring prompt early interventions. All communal rooms within schemes have been closed since March 2020 along with any social activities that had been taking place. With the Lockdown restrictions being reduced/removed arrangements are being made to reopen all of the rooms in July 2021 to support tenants usage.

3.1 Sheltered Housing Review

This will explore the whole of the sheltered housing offer to tenants both before/during the pandemic and future proof the provision by adapting and refining to the needs of our prospective tenant cohort and the wider community. We will ensure our tenants; Tenancy Services Team and other stakeholders including Norfolk County Council Adult Social Services and Age Concern are consulted to understand what service they would like to see delivered moving forward and to understand future needs and demand. We will consider:

- What elements of the service have worked well (pre and during the current COVID pandemic) and areas that could be improved
- Tenants preferred communication and support method/frequency
- Range of services that are desired by sheltered tenants linked to service costs reflecting the self-funding nature of the sheltered housing service
- Review of current and future demand and need for sheltered housing over the short and long term (10-20 years) including care needs and the types of homes and services needed to meet these needs.
- Whether the existing types, sizes and locations of sheltered housing properties meet current and future needs and demand.
- What types of communal provision are required within sheltered housing schemes – for example laundry rooms.
- How communal rooms can be effectively operated to ensure all rooms maximise capacity to provide benefits to tenants and the wider community
- What other service providers are delivering as part of their sheltered housing offer and best practice in relation to sheltered housing delivery.

The findings will shape the recommendations we will make in our final report proposed to be delivered to Housing & Neighbourhoods Committee in early 2022 to ensure tenants receive the most effective service to support independent living moving forward.

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial risks at present, but there may be in future depending on the outcome of the full report. This would be linked to additional costs of an enhanced service; the impact of an increased service charge to tenants and eligibility of Housing Benefit. The HRA currently subsidises the Housing Benefit element by 30%. An increase in overall service costs is likely to result in a greater liability to the Housing Revenue Account. There may also be capital costs if changes to the type of homes/communal facilities are required as a result of the review.

5.1 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications in this report, recommendations made in the full report will have consideration of the Housing Act 1985 in relation to areas including consultation and service charges.

6.1 Risk Implications

The full review proposed will include a statutory consultation regarding any changes to service to ensure all views on tenants are considered.

7.1 Conclusion

This approach to reviewing the Sheltered Housing Service ensures the Council considers the views of all relevant parties including tenants when shaping future service delivery. It will ensure our tenants continue to be supported to live independently in our homes and we respond to their needs to promote sustainable communities.

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Via ELT
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Via ELT
Existing Council Policies:	None
Financial Implications (including VAT and tax):	See section 4
Legal Implications (including human rights):	See section 5
Risk Implications:	See section 6
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	Will be considered as part of the review
Crime & Disorder:	N/A
Every Child Matters:	N/A