



**NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Name of Committee	CABINET
Directorate:	Customer and Service Delivery
Corporate Manager:	Fran Rodgers
Date:	29th January 2007

Report Title	Sheltered Housing Review
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Key Decision:	YES
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1. Recommendations

That Councillors;

- 1.1 Agree the proposed service delivery model for the sheltered housing service; structuring service provision to three service levels, being implemented from April 2007.
- 1.2 Agree the proposed support charges for the three service levels, subject to final negotiation with the Supporting People Commissioning Body.
- 1.3 Agree the proposals for achieving the target employee structure by April 2008.
- 1.4 Agree that as part of the wider stock condition review and asset management strategy further work is undertaken during 2007/08 to determine future investment or decommissioning options for sheltered schemes.

2. Summary

2.1 Northampton Borough Council manages a stock of 2300 sheltered housing properties consisting a mix of flats and bungalows grouped into schemes. Residents in sheltered housing receive housing related support form a visiting warden and pay a support charge in addition to the rent for this service.

2.2 An extensive review of the Sheltered Housing Service has been undertaken

aiming to ensure the service provides value for money and that it is effectively targeted to those with an identified need. Additionally the service is required to accommodate reduced levels of funding through supporting people grant from 2007/08.

- 2.3 The review recommends remodelling the Sheltered Housing Service to structure future service provision to residents around three levels of housing related support.
- 2.4 The three service levels are structured to provide a best fit to the varying needs of the client base and were arrived at following consultation with existing residents. All current residents have been assessed against the proposed service levels and future applicants for sheltered housing will be individually assessed to determine the level of service they receive.
- 2.5 Support charges to residents will vary depending on the level of support provided, however the majority of residents will qualify to have their support charges met through Supporting People Grant.

3. Report Background

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 Northampton Borough Council manages a stock of 2300 sheltered housing properties. The properties consist of a mix of flats and bungalows grouped into schemes. The schemes are either, sheltered or semi-sheltered. Semi-sheltered residents receive a monthly home visit from a visiting warden and sheltered residents receive a daily visit Monday to Friday. All properties are individually connected to the 24-hour Call Care facility. In addition to the rent a support charge is payable by residents receiving these services.
- 3.1.2 Funding for the service is achieved through a combination of Supporting People Grant, resident's contributions and HRA provision. Supporting People Grant comes from the government but is administered locally by the County Council. Residents who qualify for Housing Benefit are eligible to have their support charge met by Supporting People Grant. Residents who are not eligible for Supporting People funding pay the support charge themselves. Currently around 83% of residents qualify for Supporting People Grant.
- 3.1.3 Support charges are at present £4.91 for semi-sheltered and £13.50 for sheltered. Additionally Northampton Borough Council currently gives transitional protection to 'self paying' residents who lived in our sheltered housing before April 2003 when Supporting People funding was introduced, the transitional protection being the difference between the sheltered housing support charge they paid then and the higher charge introduced in 2003. Self-payers benefiting from transitional protection currently pay £3.25 for semi-sheltered and £7.68 for sheltered.

3.1.4 Assessment for and allocation of the Council's sheltered housing primarily takes account of housing rather than support needs and the subsequent standard warden visits are not at present sufficiently tailored to the needs of the individual resident. The sheltered housing service needs to demonstrate it is providing value for money and therefore services must in the future be more effectively targeted to those who have an identified need.

3.1.6 The County Council's Supporting People Strategy has set out priorities for the supporting people programme for the five year period 2005 to 2010. One of the direct impacts of the strategy on Northampton Borough Council's Sheltered Housing Service is a reduced level of Supporting People Grant. As a consequence Northampton Borough Council is required to make savings against the cost of current service provision.

3.1.7 Against this background a comprehensive review of the Sheltered Housing Service was undertaken during 2005. The review aimed to address:

- The options for the development of a service based around individual support needs.
- The potential issues around a shortfall in the funding for the Sheltered Housing Service.
- The need to ensure that service provision is of good quality at an acceptable cost.

3.2 Future Service Delivery Model

3.2.1 The sheltered housing review was conducted in consultation with stakeholders and recommended the service be delivered through a needs based model structuring service provision around three levels of housing related support.

3.2.2 Consultation with existing residents identified a range of service levels that would provide the most appropriate fit for the mix of requirements the customer base presents. Proposed service levels have therefore been identified as:

- Level 1 (low support needs) – A monthly warden visit plus 24 hour intercom connection to Call Care.
- Level 2 (medium support needs) - Three warden visits per week plus 24-hour intercom connection to Call Care.
- Level 3 (high support needs) – A daily warden visit including weekends plus 24 hour intercom connection to Call Care.

3.3 Assessment

3.3.1 Applicants for sheltered housing will be individually assessed under the above categories to determine the level of support required. A trained assessor will carry out the assessment, which is based around a common assessment form, examining all aspects of potential housing support need.

3.3.2 Individual assessments have been undertaken with all current sheltered housing residents between May and September 2006. The assessments identified: 40% of residents with a level one need, 55.5% with a level two need and 4.5% with a level three need. Feedback from residents about the assessment process has been very positive.

3.4 Future Service Charging Levels

3.4.1 Financial modelling undertaken with Accounting Services has identified appropriate support charges for the three service levels based on service costs and eligible expenditure. Full equation and weighting mechanisms are recorded within the project plan. Recommended charging levels have been calculated at:

Service Level	Support Charge (48 weeks)
Level One	£5.53
Level Two	£12.01
Level Three	£17.64

3.4.3 Charges for residents in receipt of Housing Benefit, around 83%, will be met through Supporting People Grant. Initial discussions with the County Council Supporting People Team indicate that the charges are within the range they would expect, although sign off is subject final agreement of the Supporting People Commissioning Body.

3.4.2 Benchmarking with other local providers in the County indicates that the proposed charges compare favourably.

3.4.4 Analysis of the 17% of self-payers has been undertaken and the following table indicates the proportion those of residents where the new charge will represent either a reduction in payment or an increase in payment.

Analysis of Self Paying Sheltered Housing Residents	
New support charge is less than existing payment	30.92%
New support charge is less than £1.00 extra	27.30%
New support charge is between £1.01 and £2.50 extra	7.89%
New support charge is between £2.51 and £5.00 extra	26.64%
New support charge is between £5.01 and £10 extra	6.90%
New support charge is more that £10 extra	0.32%

It is intended that where self-paying residents face an increase in excess of £1 they be individually contacted to ensure any benefit entitlement is maximised and where appropriate residents are assisted to make a Fairer Charging Application. Some residents may be eligible to have all or part of their support charge paid by Supporting People Grant as a result of a Fairer Charging Assessment.

3.5 Service Structure

- 3.5.1 Statistical information from the individual assessment process identifies that the service will need an employee resource to undertake just under 240,000 individual home visits per year to sheltered housing residents. Some flexibility within this figure is required because customer needs will not remain static and there will be an element of stair casing between the assessed levels. This does however represent a substantial reduction against the visiting commitment for the existing service. This is achieved because visits are based on individual need rather than a standard number of visits regardless of individual requirement.
- 3.5.2 The identified visiting commitment largely determines the employee structure required to deliver the service. The proposed structure for the future sheltered housing service consisting twenty-nine FTE visiting wardens grouped into teams under three supervisory posts and one team leader is currently under consultation with unions and employees.
- 3.5.3 The proposed structure represents a reduction in the current establishment however it is projected that current vacancies and natural wastage can achieve the target workforce by April 2008. Analysis indicates that this approach is likely to provide the more cost effective route to the target structure when compared with potential redundancy costs. It is therefore recommended that, subject to consultation, new working arrangements be implemented from April 07, utilising the existing workforce, with the aim of achieving the target structure by April 2008.

3.6 Sheltered Housing Stock

- 3.6.1 Despite the relatively large stock of sheltered housing properties some of the properties used to provide the service are not particularly suitable, some have poor access, for example first floor flats with no lifts, others do not have local shops and facilities, this make them less attractive to older people. Linking to the wider housing stock condition review and asset management strategy it is proposed that further work be undertaken during 2007/08 to determine future investment or decommissioning options for some sheltered schemes.

4. Options and Evaluation of Options

- 4.1 The provision of sheltered housing is not a mandatory service however, as part of an overall strategy to deliver the services people need to enable them to live in their own homes, it provides an essential element. While the Council could decide it no longer wished to provide the service this is not considered an option given that the service provides support to more than 2000 older and vulnerable people to enable them to maintain independence in their own homes.
- 4.2 No change to the existing service is not an option given that the service must accommodate savings against supporting people funding, be able to

demonstrate value for money and ensure resources are effectively targeted to those with an identified need.

4.3 The proposed model for future service delivery provides an option that tailors services to individual requirements, provides what current sheltered housing residents and future applicants want from a sheltered housing service and supports NCC strategic objectives for the provision of housing related support.

5. Resource Implications (including Financial Implications)

5.1 Funding for the service through Supporting People Grant will reduce by 10 to 15% over the next 3 years. Additionally the service is required to make annual savings of £100,000 against Supporting People Grant funding from the commencement of the financial year 2007/08.

5.2 Adopting the proposed needs based service model ensures resources are effectively targeted through an identified level of need and the resulting charging arrangements proposed for the service achieve the required savings against Supporting People Grant.

5.3 The delivery of a needs based service is achieved with a reduced employee structure which will provide savings against the current establishment to off set the reduced funding through supporting people.

5.4 Savings against the current costs of transitional protection, around £63,000 per year, will be achieved by moving to the new charging levels.

6. Risk and Opportunity Issues

6.1 A risk management strategy has been developed and is contained within the project plan.

6.2 Once established, there is opportunity to offer the service to self-payers who reside in accommodation other than our current designated sheltered housing schemes. This approach has been adopted by other local authorities and provides additional income to set against the costs of the service.

7. Consultees (Internal and External)

Internal	Consultation with unions and employees is currently being undertaken. Accounting Services Human Resources
External	Consultation with service users has been undertaken through surveys, focus groups and a sub group of NTACTION. Northamptonshire County Council – Supporting People Team

8. Compliance Issues

A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes

Recovery Plan
Improvement Delivery Plan: Meeting the needs of vulnerable people – Undertaking needs analysis for sheltered housing. The implementation of a needs based service ensures the services are more effectively tailored to individual support requirements.
Corporate Plan
From the Corporate Plan 2006/7: Listen to local people and provide the services they need – Service delivery will be agreed with individual residents and tailored to their needs. Manage the Council's finances efficiently – Resources are directed according to identified need.


B: Other Implications

Other Strategies
Provision of sheltered housing is a key component of the supporting people strategy for Northamptonshire.
Finance Comments
The proposed charging levels will adhere to the financial targets set out in section five.
Legal Comments
None

9. Background Papers

Title	Description	Source
Review of Sheltered Housing Service – Final Report July 2005	Background report to the Sheltered Housing Review	Housing Services
Supporting People 5yr Strategy 2005-2010	Strategy for the delivery of a programme for the provision of housing related support services in Northamptonshire	Northamptonshire County Council

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