

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	17 May 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Housing for Varying Needs Review – update and proposals
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/16/066
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update elected members of the progress of the Review of Housing for Varying Needs – A Strategic Review of our Sheltered and Very Sheltered Housing. The report will inform members of the progress of the transition to amenity housing of designated blocks, the progress with upgrading Provost Hogg Court to Very Sheltered Housing and the decommissioning of Smithfield Court.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that committee note:

- i. the progress of transition to amenity housing at designated sheltered housing developments;
- ii. the work to convert Provost Hogg Court from sheltered housing to very sheltered housing;
- iii. the decommissioning of Smithfield Court to mainstream housing

It is further recommended that committee approve the following:

- iv. to instruct officers to develop a range of methods of delivering the housing support service in agreement with Social Care & Welfare and Bon-Accord Care to sheltered and amenity tenants in the transition blocks and in other blocks assessed as unsuitable as sheltered developments in the long term.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Physical alterations to buildings are being funded from the housing revenue account under the void repairs budget or

capital budget for works involved in the upgrading to very sheltered housing.

- 3.2 The outcomes of the Review are intrinsically linked to the proposals put forward within the 5 year Corporate Business Plan and the HRA Business Plan.

#### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any changes to staffing levels, their remits, roles and responsibilities will be undertaken in full consultation with staff and their Trade Unions. (The majority of on site staff are employed by Bon Accord Care.)
- 4.2 Communication with tenants has been on-going throughout this review with regular updates being provided to the Sheltered Housing Network/Forum, updates to the web pages of Aberdeen City Council's site and articles in the Newsbite publication.

#### 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 Previous reports "Housing for Varying Needs Review – A Strategic Review of our Sheltered and Very Sheltered Housing" were presented in January 2013 and March 2013.
- 5.2 The recommendations for the future use of current sheltered and very sheltered developments were agreed.
- 5.3 Officers were instructed to commence letting properties in designated developments as amenity housing and to consult with existing tenants on reducing their level of support if they wished and subject to a support needs assessment.
- 5.4 Agree a four-tier model of housing support service; amenity, amenity+, sheltered and very sheltered.
- 5.5 Upgrade up to 5 complexes to Very Sheltered housing commencing with Provost Hogg Court.
- 5.6 Decommission Smithfield Court to mainstream housing.
- 5.7 **Sheltered to Amenity - Developments in Transition:**

The following developments were identified as suitable for amenity housing and included in the first phase of the implementation:

- Balmoral Court (45%)
- Bede House Court (54%)
- Craigton Park (46%)
- Meadow Court (49%)
- Regensburg Court (49%)
- Seaview House (53%)

- Constitution Lane (75%)
- Constitution Street (75%)
- South Constitution Street (58%)
- Thorngrove Court (92%)

Most of these developments had some vacancies and these were mainly eradicated with the move to amenity lettings. In addition, a small number of tenants opted to move to the amenity service. Since then the transition has been as voids arose.

The result is that these complexes now vary from 45% amenity occupation in Balmoral Court to 92% amenity occupation in Thorngrove Court. The % figures above represent the transition for each complex.

The transition phase has shown the following:

1. In the majority of blocks demand was initially stimulated thereby reducing voids but not sustained in all blocks
2. The mixing of sheltered and amenity tenants has not resulted in issues with differing lifestyles.
3. The pace of transition has not allowed any significant staff saving.

In addition to the above complexes, Berry Moss Court and Parkhill Court in Dyce were initially included. A further review of these complexes took place and whilst the initial assessments were still found to be appropriate, a further option was identified whereby these complexes would be viable to continue as sheltered housing if they were regarded as one complex. This was approved by Committee subject to consultation and agreement with the tenants. I am pleased to say that following consultation, agreement was reached with the tenants for the complexes to be managed by one Senior Personal Carer (SPC). The SPC rotating between the two complexes on a Morning/Afternoon split. I am further pleased to advise that there have been no issues raised by tenants or staff. This would appear to be a model that could be replicated elsewhere. Consultations have taken place with the tenants of Bede House Court and Craigton Park regarding a similar alternative service. The housing support service to Thorngrove Court was already delivered remotely.

### **Sheltered to Very Sheltered Housing:**

Provost Hogg Court was identified for a number of reasons. It would provide very sheltered housing in an area of the city that was lacking but required; there was an opportunity to re-introduce the former day centre into the overall facility as the kitchen/dining area thereby causing little or no withdrawal of facilities and accordingly minimal disruption to existing tenants. There were legal issues regarding the ownership of the day centre and as such the legality to fund the upgrade from the HRA. A further delay was encountered during the bad weather when significant problems with the roof were encountered. These issues have been resolved albeit resulted in a delay to the

programme. It is now anticipated that works will be concluded by mid June 2016. Thereafter the facility will be equipped and furnished.

The current guidance, based on the shifting the balance of care agenda, suggests that the scale of provision for very sheltered housing per 1000 population aged 65 and over is 20. Our current level is 3.4. We therefore need to continue to expand this provision and research is ongoing to identify the next location for very sheltered housing.

### **Sheltered to Mainstream:**

Smithfield Court was identified as a complex that was unsuitable for sheltered or amenity and as was to be totally decommissioned to mainstream housing. The complex housed an NHS facility of 20 units which was to move to Clashieknowe. In addition there were already a number of voids in the complex which left 19 tenants in the complex requiring re-housing.

Committee approved that those tenants be granted priority to suitable alternative accommodation and that they should receive the equivalent of home loss payments and associated costs. This was achieved within budget.

The timescales involved to achieve the rehousing of sheltered housing tenants to create a vacant building, are lengthy and extremely challenging and it is not desirable to have a high level of properties sitting empty until completion. It would be more appropriate to utilise these properties during the process by letting them under the relaxed criteria or special lettings initiative (below).

### **Reduced Criteria/Special Lettings Initiative:**

A reduced criteria process based on social needs and a special lettings initiative was introduced in 2015 to allocate vacancies in a sensitive manner to clients not meeting the criteria at this time but likely to require amenity/sheltered housing in the reasonable future.

These initiatives have virtually eradicated voids in the low demand sheltered housing complexes mainly high rise. The impact and results are in line with those in the transition complexes. Under the initiatives, first preference is given to those with an assessed need for the specific house type, thereafter applicants who meet the minimum criteria to be considered for sheltered and amenity properties are considered. The lettings initiative also includes provision for key workers.

The relaxed criteria and special letting initiative has been applied to all amenity and sheltered vacancies with no applicants with an assessed need on the list. Since 1 April 2015, 97 allocations have been achieved using this criteria. Whilst this has reduced the level of voids, it has also reduced the level of care and support required at

the developments thereby increasing the urgency to review the delivery of the housing support service.

As a result a sense check has been carried out on all complexes and the results are as attached in Appendix A.

### **Summary:**

1. The transitional approach is proving successful albeit at a slower pace than desired.
  2. The upgrade to very sheltered has still to be concluded and questions remain unanswered at this time regarding the transition.
  3. The decommissioning to mainstream is an expensive option that can be compounded by a single tenant being unreasonable in their expectations of suitable alternative accommodation.
  4. The special lettings initiative and relaxed criteria provides the basis for an alternative approach to the full decommissioning to mainstream.
  5. Staff savings have not been maximised through the transitional approach and an alternative needs to be established. This would also remove anxieties held by existing tenants as to the future use of their complexes.
6. IMPACT

#### **Improving Customer Experience –**

Tenants in current sheltered blocks including those in transition will have more certainty over the future of their block thereby removing much of the anxiety associated with the previously approved recommendations. Staff resources will be more flexible to meet the changing care and support needs of individuals.

#### **Improving Staff Experience –**

Staff will be able to devote more time to meeting the needs of the individuals.

#### **Improving our use of Resources –**

Allows a more flexible approach to meeting the care and support needs of individuals thereby reducing costs to the services and the individuals.

#### **Corporate -**

The Community Plan sets out our vision for the future of the city – an even better place to live and work, where people can expect high quality services to meet their needs.

This report meets the following objectives:

- Homes Challenge – improve the quality of housing and environment for individuals and the community.
- Adopt and implement strategies to support independent living for people with special needs.

It also meets the objectives in the policy statement Aberdeen – the Smarter City”.

Smarter Living – we will enhance the physical and emotional wellbeing of all our citizens by offering support and activities which promote independence, resilience, confidence and self esteem.

#### **Public –**

The report may be of interest to the general public. The contents of this report will treat individuals equally in terms of race, gender, LGBT, older people and people with disabilities.

## **7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

The longer the 2013 HVN Review decisions are outstanding, the longer some of our tenants are living in uncertainty. The creation of a flexible housing support service within amenity and sheltered housing developments will provide reassurance to our tenants.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS (contributed to the original report)**

Aberdeen City and Shire – Housing Need and Demand Assessment (2010)

Housing Statistics for Scotland 2011; Key Trends Summary 2011, Scottish Government

Wider Planning for an Ageing Population – Housing and Communities Consultation on the work stream report and its suggested actions, Scottish Government 2010

Age, Home and Community; Strategy for Housing for Scotland’s Older People: 2012-2021, Scottish Government 2011

Report; Housing for Varying Needs Review to Housing and Environment Committee 14 December 2011

Report; CHI/15/278 Review of Void Processes, 27 October 2015

Report; CHI/15096 Update of the Housing for Varying Needs Review, 18 March 2015

## **9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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