

**Bolsover District Council**

**Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee**

**19<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

**Hard to Let / Sheltered Housing Update**

This report is public

**Report of the Head of Housing**

**Purpose of the Report**

- To update Members on the progress made by the Housing Working Group in looking at modernisation of sheltered housing
- To agree the principals of the current design for modernising sheltered housing and to progress this to tender stage.
- To update members on the Safe and Warm scheme and propose a reduction in heating charges for the next three years.

**1 Report Details**

- 1.1 During 2014/15 the Improvement Scrutiny conducted a review of hard to let sheltered housing. This was reported to Executive in March 2015 with updates provided in June 2015, November 2015 and February 2016. These updates included the setting up of a Housing Working Group which is a working group of officer and members.
- 1.2 Since this time the Housing Working Group have been looking into a number of issues including the layout of some sheltered housing schemes and the need to bring these up to an acceptable modern standard. This has included meetings, site visits and meeting with architects.
- 1.3 The group looked at 2 schemes in detail.
- 1.4 Firstly, Valley View in Hillstown. This scheme has been unpopular with new residents as the majority of accommodation is in bedsit type accommodation. The proposed redesign of Valley View includes converting existing bedsits into one bedroom flats. This is done by a redesign of the layout within the existing footprint and eliminating wasted space.
- 1.5 There are also some improvements to the communal areas, created by moving the existing laundry which allows the residents lounge to be extended, and a space for buggy parking inside the building.

- 1.6 Although there are no immediate plans to aim the flats at a different demographic, the proposed design does allow the building to be split into a sheltered and a general needs scheme at a future date relatively easily.
- 1.7 Secondly, Alder House in Shirebrook. This scheme consists of both bedsits and one bed flats. This has been unpopular due to its location which although is in a quiet area is some distance from shops and local amenities. The property is poorly designed with large communal areas, and is built on a slope meaning that there are steps in the main corridor.
- 1.8 The proposed design for Alder House look at splitting the property into two distinct units. One side will be a reduced sheltered housing scheme for frail elderly tenants this will consist of 8 units and will have some communal areas. This will be on to floors with a lift access but level corridors.
- 1.9 The other wing will consist of around 12 self contained flats. Initial conversations have taken place with a local charity who offer supported accommodation with the view of offering this property under a Head Lease scheme to the charity who would then sublet units of supported accommodation. It is envisaged that this will be limited to single people over the age of 35. Alternatively it would be possible for the council to offer the flats as general needs clients over the age of , say, 50.
- 1.10 The Heating Systems on both sites is due for renewal within the next 5 years. It is proposed that the conversion work and the heating upgrade takes place at the same time to minimise cost and disruption.
- 1.11 It is worth noting the design of Valley View is almost identical to another sheltered schemes at Parkfields, Clowne. Unlike Valley View where there has been bathroom upgrades over the past few years, the heating system at Parkfields is due for replacement and is due for a heating upgrade as part of phase 1 of the Safe and Warm scheme which is currently out to tender. It is proposed to carry out the alterations at Park fields at the same time as the heating upgrade. And if successful this design option could be repeated on these other sites. In all cases the work for the redesign should be coordinated with the Heating upgrade under the Safe and Warm scheme.
- 1.12 The work on site is likely to be disruptive especially to older tenant, but this can be partially mitigated by improving empty flats and moving tenants into these. It is therefore recommended that properties at Parkfields and Alder House are not let until the work is completed. For future schemes the JAD Community Safety & Head of Housing is given the delegated powers to keep properties empty in advance of improvement works.
- 1.13 Members should also be aware of the Safe and Warm Scheme. This is a scheme to update the heating and hot water systems for sheltered and bungalow accommodation where there is a district heating system. Part of this work will involve the installation of individual energy monitors which allow tenants to be billed for their actual use of energy rather than paying a fixed amount. This project is designed to deliver the corporate target of reducing energy use in sheltered housing by 10% by 2019. This work needs to be coordinated with the modernisation work mentioned in this report.

- 1.14 The Safe and Warm Scheme will mean the current methodology of calculating charges for heating is obsolete. It is recommended that the Council make a commitment to reduce heating charges by 1% each year for the next three years or until we are able to provide individual bills to each property based on actual use. The 1% reduction echoes the reduction in rent over the same period.

## **2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

- 2.1 That investment is needed in sheltered housing to bring this to a modern standard.
- 2.2 That there need to be coordination between the modernisation project and the existing Safe and warm scheme.

## **3 Consultation and Equality Impact**

- 3.1 Not directly, but it is intended to carry out consultation at each site once plans are available.

## **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 Do nothing. Not acceptable as there remains a demand for good quality homes for older people

## **5 Implications**

### **5.1 Finance and Risk Implications**

5.1.1. There is some additional cost in progressing the initial design into detailed drawing and specifications that can be used to tender for work. This can be met from existing budgets.

5.1.2 There is some risk in reducing heating charges, but this is temporary as the medium term aim is to install controllable heating and heat meters. This potential shortfall can be met from existing budgets

### **5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection**

Not directly

### **5.3 Human Resources Implications**

Not directly

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 That Members support the proposed modernisation of sheltered housing schemes
- 6.2 That the officers draw up detailed plans and specifications for both Parkfields and Alder House and seek tenders for this work
- 6.3 That modernisation projects are linked to safe and Warm Projects

- 6.4 That vacant properties at Parkfields and Alder House are not advertised.
- 6.5 That the JAD Community Safety and Head of Housing is given the delegated power not to let other schemes where modernisation is due.
- 6.6 That heating charges at sheltered housing schemes are reduced by 1% for each of the next three years, or until a heat meter is installed at the property.

**7 Decision Information**

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	Yes/No
<b>District Wards Affected</b>	
<b>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</b>	

**8 Document Information**

Appendix No	Title
<b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Report Author	Contact Number

Report Reference –