

Bolsover District Council

Executive

29 February 2016

Update on Hard to Let Warden Aided Properties

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT

This report is public

Purpose of the Report

To provide an update to members on progress on the recommendations from the Improvement Scrutiny report into hard to let properties and the work of the Housing Working Group.

1 Background

- 1.1 On 2nd March 2015 Executive received a report from Improvement Scrutiny Committee on hard to let properties. That report made the following recommendations.
- That Bedsits be renamed Studio Flats and this term be used in all advertising of the properties
 - That a programme of improvements to void properties be developed which includes basic decoration to ensure that the properties are ready to move into.
 - That an advertising/marketing campaign be undertaken to promote the sheltered accommodation with a number of void properties (predominantly Valley View, Bolsover and Victoria House, Creswell).
 - That the flat at Valley View currently used as an office for the Support Officers be returned for use as residential accommodation.
 - That support be considered to offer to interested tenants as an incentive to move into Sheltered Accommodation.
 - That the costs of changing the Abris system to allow the wording of the Choice Based Letting adverts to be amended together with any impacts on A1 Housing and Rykneld Homes be investigated with a view to improving the adverts on the Choice Based Lettings System for Sheltered Accommodation.

- 1.2 The Executive did not accept the full range of recommendations, but did accept the following
1. The report of the scrutiny review into Hard to Let properties be noted.
 2. That recommendations concerning operational actions (such as painting and decorating) be undertaken as soon as practicable, with a further report to come back to Executive in three months times setting out what action had been taken and how the other recommendations could be taken forward.
 3. Thanks be expressed to the Scrutiny Officer for her support to the Scrutiny Committee over the past year. .
- 1.3 An update was provided to Executive on 15th June 2015. This provided an update on the operational issues identified by the scrutiny report and established a working party made up of officers and members to consider the issues considered by the Scrutiny Review and other issues around sheltered housing.
- 1.4 Further updates were provided on 2nd November 2105 on the progress of the working group. This included the wider review of sheltered housing
- 1.5 Special Executive on 18th November also received an update on the progress of upgrading the heating arrangements within The Sheltered Housing schemes as part of a report which agreed the purchase of a temporary heating rig.

2. Update

- 2.1 Appendix A provides an update of the progress against the proposals from the Scrutiny Report. This demonstrates that progress is being maintained towards implementing the recommendations, however, the timescale for implementation has been shaped by the requirement to ensure that changes are introduced in a cost effective fashion. The recommendations are therefore generally being introduced in line with wider changes either in the Council's own systems or in Supporting People arrangements. It is recommended that this report is used as the basis of a report back to the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee concerning progress to date.
- 2.1 As a consequence of the support office moving into the guest room at Valley View, another flat has been identified as the replacement guest room. Members are asked to approve removing flat1 from the rent roll as this is now used as the replacement guest room.
- 2.2 The Housing Working Group has been making progress on the longer term future for sheltered housing schemes, this has included site visits and making use of the Peter Fletcher report which looked at the longer term future for services, and the buildings from which the service is provided. This report was commissioned against a background of declining demand for Sheltered Housing schemes which is part of a wider national trend. Locally, the main evidence of the reducing popularity of Sheltered Accomodation has been the increasing difficulty which has been experienced in securing tenants for properties in Sheltered Housing schemes.

2.3 Options that have been considered have included

- considering alternative use for those schemes that are located away from town centres as these are both less suited to residents needs and less popular.
- Conversion to other housing uses for properties with small flats, and
- provision of more accommodation in popular areas close to town centres

2.4 The group have also recognised that there are two significant decisions that will have an impact on the long term future of sheltered housing.

2.5 Firstly, Derbyshire County Council are considering the long term future of a number of services that were previously funded through the Supporting People regime, these includes services for older people and in particular Scheme Managers and Support Workers.

2.6 Secondly, that the Housing Service has commissioned an M&E consultant to look at the provision of heating and hot water at all schemes with communal heating, which includes sheltered housing. The aim of this work is to provide heating and hot water systems that are more efficient, controllable by the end user, allow individual billing based on usage and eliminate Health and Safety risks including Legionella. This upgrading of the heating systems should address one of the areas which results in greatest tenant dissatisfaction.

2.7 It is likely that both these issues will have significant impact on sheltered housing 'offer' that the council can make. In particular, the DCC review is likely to change the nature of support, possibly by removing this entirely. This is likely to significantly reduce existing levels of demand.

2.8 The group has followed on from the Scrutiny Recommendations and considered a wider marketing and branding of the range of services that are offered. As a result of this the intention is, from April 2016, to brand all the services as Independent Living. The timing of this is intended to coincide with the launch of the new Central Control platform.

3 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 Executive are aware that there have been significant changes to both the demand for sheltered housing and to the level of funding that is available through Supporting People. The Council is seeking to adapt to these changes by improving the current 'offer' through upgrades to the heating systems and by more active marketing of the Sheltered Housing scheme. While the Council will continue with work designed to ensure that Sheltered Housing meets the needs and aspirations of local residents it needs to be recognised that there has been a reduction both locally and nationally in the demand for Sheltered Schemes and that this reduction in demand is likely to be further exacerbated by reduction of funding under the Supporting People changes which will effectively pass some of the costs of the scheme onto the residents.

4 Consultation and Equality Impact

4.1 While no direct consultation has been undertaken in respect of this report the Council does undertake regular structured consultation with our tenants through tenant liaison groups and by way of the Tenant Satisfaction survey.

5 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 These are considered throughout the report

6 Implications

6.1 Finance and Risk Implications

None arising directly from this report.

6.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

None arising directly from this report.

6.3 Human Resources Implications

None arising directly from this report.

7 Recommendations

7.1 That the contents of this report are noted.

7.2 That flat 1 Valley View is removed from the rent roll to reflect its current use as a guest room.

7.3. That officers provide an update of progress to date to the Healthy, Safe, Clean and Green Communities Scrutiny Committee.

8 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? (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)	No
District Wards Affected	All
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	

9 **Document Information**

Appendix No	Title
Background Papers (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
Peter Campbell	3038

Report Reference –

Review of Hard to Let Sheltered Accommodation Updated Feb 2016

Recommendation	Update	Status
1. That Bedsits be renamed Studio Flats and this term be used in all advertising of the properties	Executive agreed this will take place as part of the review of CBL and 'cleaning' of the waiting list. This will be launched on April 2016.	Complete
2. That a programme of improvements to void properties be developed which includes basic decoration to ensure that the properties are ready to move into.	Originally this was included in a painting contract, which having being procured did not deliver good value. An alternative contract is currently being procured which it is anticipated will be reported to Executive in March 2016	Revised target April 2016
3. That an advertising/marketing campaign be undertaken to promote the sheltered accommodation with a number of void properties	Previously agreed that this would be deferred until action 2. Is completed However, note that the wider service, including support officers and Careline is to be promoted from April 2016 to coincide with the fresh launch of Careline	On hold
4. That the flat at Valley View currently used as an office for the Support Officers be returned for use as residential accommodation	As discussed at a previous meeting of Executive the support officers (previously known as mobile wardens) have moved from their office from a vacant flat into the former guest room (which is smaller). As a consequence another flat will be used as the guest room.	Complete
5. That support be considered to offer to interested tenants as an incentive to move into Sheltered Accommodation	This was not accepted by Executive as a priority. This can be explored once SP funding is clarified.	On hold. Pending clarification by DCC concerning future operation of Supporting

<p>6. That the costs of changing the Abrisas system to allow the wording of the Choice Based Letting adverts to be amended together with any impacts on A1 Housing and Rykneld Homes be investigated with a view to improving the adverts on the Choice Based Lettings System for Sheltered Accommodation.</p>	<p>The cost of this change were prohibitive within the Abrisas system Moreover, as A1 and CBC withdrew from the regional scheme this effectively ended.</p> <p>Executive agreed to consider other options for CBL software and if introduced this recommendation would be implemented.</p>	<p>People regime.</p> <p>On hold, pending a decision about the future of the software used for CBL.</p>
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Peter Campbell