

Committee:	Date:
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee	25 September 2014
Subject: Sheltered Housing Review	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Decision

Summary

This report sets out the findings of the sheltered housing review together with key options and recommendations for further action.

The purpose of the review was to look at the City's existing social housing provision for older people and to consider what changes might be needed to reflect national policy and the changing needs and aspirations of people regarding accommodation for their later years.

The findings have been clear and unsurprising. The majority of people today do not view traditional sheltered housing as an appealing prospect, and most people wish to stay in their existing homes as long as possible. Changes in health and social care policy promote this path, and new technology offers increasingly sophisticated ways of providing support.

The City's existing sheltered housing schemes all need significant investment to improve and update them. However, this will not be enough to bring all of them up to a level where they offer appropriate and attractive accommodation which will attract new residents and encourage older people to move in order to free up larger homes for families.

The review and this report sets out a number of proposals for the City to address these issues and improve its housing offer for older people. Broadly, these are:

- a new focus on the building of 'lifetime' homes as part of our development programme;
- a move to include housing suitable for older people on all our estates where possible, so that people can stay in their own communities when they need to move, rather than uprooting to where there is a sheltered scheme;
- changes in how we deliver housing support and ensure that older people are not socially isolated.

It is important to note that, because of the vulnerability of many of the people involved, these changes cannot be made quickly, but will require careful and sensitive planning and implementation, with appropriate timescales.

This report represents the end of Phase 1 of the Sheltered Housing Review. The next phase will be to carry out detailed options appraisals for each of our existing schemes and to identify opportunities for building lifetime homes on our estates.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the review and report and to:

- Recommend to the Community & Children's Services Committee that future strategy should be to provide lifetime homes, suitable for older people, on every estate as far as possible;
- Authorise officers to commission detailed options appraisals for each of the City's existing sheltered housing schemes which take into account the need to fund the development of lifetime homes;
- Request that a paper identifying opportunities for building lifetime homes on existing estates be brought to this Sub-Committee early in 2015.

Main Report

Background

1. The sheltered housing review was initiated following a report on supported living undertaken as part of the development of the City's Health and Wellbeing Commissioning Strategy. The report, approved by the Community and Children's Committee in December 2012, recommended a review of existing sheltered housing provision to assess potential for delivering improved support for older people more widely in the community.

Current Position

2. The review began in May 2013 and was conducted alongside the development of the Housing Strategy 2014-2019. Phase 1 of the review, covering research, information gathering and is now complete. This report summarises the purpose and key findings of the review together with proposals for further action. A full copy of the review is attached as Appendix 1.

Purpose and method of the review

3. The objectives of the review were to:
 - assess the quality of the City's existing sheltered housing provision, levels of demand and need;
 - identify issues and areas for improvement;
 - to develop proposals for change to modernise the sheltered housing service, position it more clearly within a balanced range of housing provision for older people, and deliver more effective and efficient support services.
4. During the review officers and members visited an extra-care housing scheme and visits were undertaken by other major housing providers to make independent assessments of City sheltered schemes. Extensive consultation with the City's sheltered housing residents and other older City residents was carried out. Officers have also undertaken research into current policy and

practice in the delivery of care and housing-related support. This has been taken into account in drafting proposals.

5. The work of the review has been overseen by a project board which included elected members.

Key points and findings of the review

6. These are summarised below. More detail on the following findings can be found in the review which is attached at Appendix 1.
 - Rising numbers of older people are likely to increase pressure on services. However, the assessment of future needs is complex; changes in aspirations, the delivery of care, and the availability of suitable alternative housing for older people are likely to lead to less demand for traditional sheltered housing.
 - Policy and technology are challenging traditional models of sheltered service provision and delivery such as the City's. Nationally, there is an oversupply of sheltered accommodation. Some authorities are re-modelling provision to provide housing-related support in more flexible ways to target resources more tightly, and across different tenures.
 - The supply of specialist housing for older people within the City and on the City's housing estates in neighbouring boroughs consists of traditional sheltered accommodation. Six schemes provide 235 units, 219 of which are social rented. There is no private retirement or extra-care provision in the City.
 - Four of the schemes are managed by the City's Housing Service. These are all located in neighbouring boroughs. Two housing associations, the Guinness Trust and Hanover, provide sheltered housing within the City to which we have some nomination rights. However, these are reducing as Iveagh Court, run by the Guinness Trust, is no longer providing sheltered accommodation.
 - Demand for sheltered housing is generally low and some schemes are difficult to let. Because of this, age limits have been lowered, and the schemes are increasingly being used to meet general housing need. This causes tension between younger residents and those who are older and have greater support needs.
 - Nationally, sheltered housing is becoming less attractive to its original market of fit and active older people. In the City, perceptions of sheltered accommodation amongst non-residents are poor and very few younger people regard it as a positive choice for their future needs.
 - Most people want to remain living in their existing homes for as long as possible, especially in the City. High levels of owner-occupation, satisfaction with their existing neighbourhood and the lack of suitable alternatives in the local market may be contributing to this, although residents also appear disinterested in private retirement housing provision.

- The requirement for extra-care housing in the City is very limited. This form of provision is unlikely to be an efficient or sustainable option for the City.
- All of the City's schemes are more than forty years old and will require significant investment and improvement in the near future to update them, meet quality and regulatory standards and match the current aspirations and requirements of older people. Even with this, they may still fail to attract tenants in the future.
- Some schemes have proved difficult to let. Two schemes, Harman Close and Mais House, suffer most from outdated space standards, kitchens and bathrooms and will require refurbishment or remodelling order to make them fit for purpose in the future. Mais House is the most problematic, suffering in addition from poor layout, an over-supply of bedsitter accommodation, poor location and low demand.

Implications of findings

7. If the City retains its sheltered housing, then planned investment and improvement will be required over the medium term to bring stock up to current quality and regulatory standards. However, refurbishment alone is unlikely to address the issues faced, or to make the traditional sheltered housing model attractive to older people in the future. The City will need to consider a different model of provision if we wish to properly meet future need in a way which reflects national policy and meets the needs and aspirations of future residents.
8. A better model for the future is the provision of 'lifetime' homes within existing and any new estates. These homes would have a high level of accessibility and be designed so that any adaptations to meet the needs of disabled people could be done quickly, easily and at a low cost. The homes would be available to general needs tenants, but priority would be given to older residents.
9. Provision of lifetime homes within estates would mean that older people would have an option to move into more suitable accommodation within their existing community, thus keeping them close to friends and neighbours and within a familiar environment – particularly important for people in the early stages of dementia.
10. This approach would require a different model of support to be provided. Rather than static 'warden' posts within sheltered schemes, floating support would be used as needed. Community facilities on our estates could be upgraded to provide appropriate places for older people to meet and enjoy activities organised by support staff – thus combatting social isolation.
11. To achieve this would require opportunities to be identified as part of the City's housing development programme. These will then need to be incorporated into the Asset Management Strategy.
12. The City would also need to consider the future of the existing sheltered schemes. Isleden House and the City of London & Gresham Almshouses are likely to remain popular choices as they provide opportunities to live

independently in a property with its own front door, but in an estate which provides additional support. These schemes, then, would benefit from improvements to make them more accessible.

13. However, Mais House and Harman Close are very outdated schemes with small flats (mostly bedsits) sited along corridors. When they were first built, meals were provided in a communal setting, and so the kitchens are extremely small and do not provide adequate facilities for people to cater for themselves. Mais House is a particular concern as, not only is it the most outdated of our schemes, but it is located at the top of a steep hill, without access to local shops and amenities, which is entirely unsuitable for older people.
14. An initial assessment has been made of Mais House with input from a specialist provider of housing for older people. As part of Phase 2 of the review, it is recommended that a detailed options appraisal of both Mais House and Harman Close is commissioned to identify whether these should be refurbished or remodelled and retained as schemes, or whether it would be better, over time, to decommission them and reprovide accommodation in a different form.

Recommendations

15. Members are asked to consider the review and report and to:
 - recommend to the Community & Children's Services Committee that future strategy should be to provide lifetime homes, suitable for older people, on every estate as far as possible;
 - authorise officers to commission detailed options appraisals for each of the City's existing sheltered housing schemes which take into account the need to fund the development of lifetime homes;
 - request that a paper identifying opportunities for building lifetime homes on existing estates be brought to this Sub-Committee early in 2015.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

16. The proposals fit with corporate priorities to provide modern efficient and high quality services for residents with a view to delivering sustainable outcomes.
17. The proposals fit with the City's housing strategy priorities to support older people, review how best use sheltered housing, the benefits of new technology and floating support.

Implications

18. The cost of the options appraisals will be in the region of £15k which can be found from local risk budgets.
19. There are no financial or legal implications at this time. These will be evaluated and included in the costed and detail options appraisals to be undertaken in the next stage of the review.

Consultation

There has been extensive consultation with City residents and residents of the City's sheltered schemes as part of this review.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Sheltered Housing Review

Background Papers:

- Supported Living Review – Community and Children's Services Committee 12 December 2012

Paul Jackson

Service Review Consultant

T: 0207 332 1574

E: paul.jackson@cityoflondon.gov