

Committee	Dated:
Community & Children's Services	15 01 2016
Subject: Sheltered Housing Review Phase 2	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Decision

Summary

In November 2014, your Committee approved a number of recommendations arising from the Sheltered Housing Review Phase 1. These included the adoption of a strategy to build 'lifetime homes' on all estates so that tenants can remain in their homes as they grow older. They also included a detailed study of Mais House, the City's sheltered housing scheme in Lewisham. This report presents the work done so far to consider options for the future of Mais House.

The Sheltered Housing Review identified a drop in demand for traditional sheltered housing and a strong preference for people to be enabled to stay in their own homes and communities in the future. Mais House has been in particularly low demand and requires a significant amount of work to be done to bring it up to a reasonable standard. Some ideas for the Mais House site have been identified in a report commissioned from a firm of consultants. However, before these can be worked up in more detail, there is a fundamental decision to be made about whether, in the future, Mais House remains a sheltered scheme for older people only, or whether it becomes a general needs development, open to residents of mixed ages.

The City's Housing Strategy, as approved by Members, identifies a demand for more general needs homes. Initial discussions with the London Borough of Lewisham suggest that this is also the case there, particularly as the borough already has an over-supply of homes for older people with low support needs. There is, then, a strong case for refurbishing or redeveloping Mais House as a lifetime homes scheme, providing accommodation suitable for people of all ages.

However, many of the current residents at Mais House have expressed a strong desire for it to remain a sheltered scheme. Many have told us they are happy there and do not wish to move, other than on a purely temporary basis. We therefore need to consider how to achieve the City's aim to provide homes to meet housing need, whilst taking into account the individual needs and wishes of the existing Mais House residents.

The report sets out the situation and the views of residents. It outlines the support that will be available to residents should it be necessary to move them to alternative accommodation, even temporarily, and proposes some measures which would go

some way to meeting their wishes, should Members decide that Mais House cannot remain a solely sheltered scheme.

Recommendation

That Members decide that they wish to either:

- Refurbish and retain Mais House as a wholly sheltered housing scheme for letting to older people only and instruct the Director of Community & Children's Services to proceed as outlined in paragraph 59 or;
- Redevelop Mais House as a lifetime homes scheme with general needs units open to people of all ages, and instruct the Director of Community & Children's Services to proceed as outlined in paragraph 60 or;
- Redevelop Mais House as a lifetime homes scheme of one bedroomed units, prioritised for older people, and instruct the Director of Community & Children's Services to proceed as outlined in paragraph 61.

Main Report

Background

1. In 2013-14, the Housing Service, with the involvement of Members, conducted the first phase of a Sheltered Housing Review. 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 review included consultation with existing sheltered housing residents and focus groups with City residents to explore their views.
2. The review found that the majority of people today do not view traditional sheltered housing as an attractive prospect, and that 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.
3. In September 2014, the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-committee recommended to the Community & Children's Services Committee that
 - a. future strategy should be to provide lifetime homes, suitable for older people, on every estate as far as possible;
 - b. officers were to commission detailed studies of each of the City's existing sheltered housing schemes, taking into account the need to fund the development of lifetime homes and identifying options for the future of each scheme;
 - c. a paper identifying opportunities for building lifetime homes on existing estates be brought to this Sub-Committee.

4. The Grand Committee subsequently agreed these recommendations. Since then, extensive work has taken place on a number of potential developments on our estates, all of which would comprise lifetime homes and would also include a proportion of wheelchair accessible homes. Feasibility work and prioritisation of schemes is ongoing.
5. It was agreed that the first detailed study should be of Mais House. This was because this building has the most pressing need for upgrading, is poorly located and is in low demand from potential tenants. A Gateway 1 paper was taken to Corporate Projects Board in June 2015 and a company, Evolution, was appointed to carry out a study and produce some ideas. The study has not yet been fully completed, as some additional work has been requested, but it is apparent that there are some broad principles to be decided before the study and the ideas it will put forward can be presented to Members and explored in detail.
6. The study of Mais House is only part of Phase 2 of the Sheltered Housing Review. This phase will also include reports for Isleden House sheltered flats, Harman Close and the City of London and Gresham Almshouses. This work is being commissioned at present and will be presented to Members at a later date.

Mais House

7. Mais House is a traditional 'hotel' style sheltered scheme (a main entrance and all flats being entered from corridors) built in 1974 and situated in Lewisham. It comprises 63 flats. It is designed to provide accommodation for older people with low-level support needs and a high degree of independence.
8. There are currently 52 residents at Mais House, ranging in age from 61 to 92. Two have lived there more than 20 years. Their ages can be broken down as follows:

Age	Number
60-69	19
70-79	16
80-89	13
90-92	4

9. The majority of flats are bedsits. These have become increasingly unpopular everywhere, and it is now recognised nationally that older people should not be expected to downsize their lives to the extent that they can fit into one room. There is also recognition that geographically dispersed families mean that many older people need space for visitors and that the trend for grandparents to provide crucial child care also means they need more space. Although some residents at Mais House have said that they prefer their bedsits, many have criticised the lack of space.

10. As well as failing to meet modern requirements for space, bedsits are extremely difficult to adapt to accommodate wheelchairs, walking frames and other needs as people grow older.
11. The scheme has several communal areas, including a kitchen and a large room originally used as a dining area where meals were provided to residents. Kitchens in individual flats are extremely small, as they were not designed for residents to cook for themselves. This has been the subject of negative feedback from some residents.
12. Mais House is located at the top of Sydenham Hill. There are splendid views, and these are clearly enjoyed by the residents. However, the nearest facilities (shops, doctors' surgeries, trains etc) are some distance away. There is a bus stop opposite the scheme, which is on three bus routes, so there is access to public transport and current residents tell us that they use this to reach local amenities.
13. Many existing residents tell us that they are happy with the location of Mais House. It is, however, cited by prospective tenants as a disadvantage. Most people on the City's waiting list come from other housing estates. Mais House is a long way from these so to move there requires them to uproot from their existing communities and support networks at a time when they are increasingly reliant on them.
14. The principles and understanding of what older people need have changed significantly since Mais House was built. The ideal location for accommodation for older people with low support needs is one which encourages them to remain healthy and active by being able to walk to shops, health facilities etc. This is not possible for most people at Mais House. Residents are generally reliant on buses, cars and taxis to go anywhere. The withdrawal in recent years of a shopping bus provided by the local council has meant that the only practical way of shopping at the local supermarket is to take a taxi, which costs £10 for a return trip.
15. There has been low demand for accommodation at Mais House for some years. Other sheltered scheme vacancies are filled from the City's waiting list but this has not been possible at Mais House and officers have promoted it through adverts in the local press and through Lewisham's Choice Based Lettings system. It has, however, remained unpopular. Since the end of Phase 1 of the Sheltered Housing Review, vacancies have not been advertised or filled, as it was felt that the flexibility of having some empty properties may be needed.
16. A full-time Scheme Manager is based at the site, although does not live there, and is supported by a cleaner. The Manager's role is not to provide care, which remains the responsibility of the local authority and health services, but to give housing-related support which helps people stay independent as long as possible. This includes maintaining a support plan for each person, paying regular visits to check on them, giving advice and information to help with day to day issues, liaising with care providers and families where appropriate and organising events and activities to combat social isolation.

17. Part of the brief to the consultants was to look at the current condition of the building and reviews it against the Decent Homes Standard. This has flagged up that, to meet the Standard, smoke seals need to be installed on doors and remedial repairs are required to ensure that windows open. Our Property Services colleagues will be ordering this work to be carried out. In other respects the units are compliant with the Standard.
18. However, it should be noted that we have already identified extensive work which is needed to improve general standards. This includes the replacement of the current, single-glazed windows, new boiler plant and hot water and heating systems, rewiring, new kitchens, bathrooms and flooring, a new fire alarm system and an asbestos survey. All of this work needs to be carried out at Mais House even if nothing else is done

London Borough of Lewisham

19. The LB Lewisham has carried out its own review of accommodation for older people as part of the research for its Housing Strategy 2015-2020. Although the review highlighted that the % of people aged over 65 in the borough is increasing, it identified that there is an over-supply of housing specifically for older people with low support needs, even taking into account demographic trends.
20. Therefore, LB Lewisham is focusing investment in extra-care housing to meet a wide range of housing and social care needs. It is piloting an enhanced investment standard on six sheltered schemes and investing further in twelve others pending further consultation and options appraisals. Where possible schemes will be retained and improved. However, some may be redeveloped for general needs housing or extra-care housing.
21. Initial discussions with officers from LB Lewisham have confirmed that the retention of Mais House as sheltered accommodation is not essential to their plans. They acknowledge that Mais House flats have proved unpopular, even when marketed through their own Choice Based Lettings scheme, and recognise that the current accommodation and location is far from ideal.
22. Given these factors, officers from Lewisham have indicated that they are supportive of the City's wish to explore options for Mais House and that they would welcome the provision of more general needs properties, to which they would have some nomination rights. They have offered support to City officers in the event that it is necessary to find alternative accommodation for some or all of the Mais House residents, and discussions have already taken place about the availability of some places in a brand-new extra-care scheme.

Views of existing residents

23. Mais House residents were consulted in 2014 as part of Phase 1 of the Sheltered Housing Review. Most expressed dissatisfaction with the condition of the building and the fact that major works such as windows replacements had been

promised some year ago and not been delivered. There were also comments about the size of flats and, in particular, the fact that kitchens are inadequate, as well as unhappiness with the lack of redecoration. Residents, however, appreciated many aspects of life at Mais House, in particular having a Scheme Manager.

24. Since the end of Phase 1, we have held four residents' meetings – in March, May, August and October of this year. In March, residents were made aware that the future of Mais House was under consideration and that Members would, in due course, be making a decision about it. They were told that all possibilities, from refurbishment to redevelopment, would be considered, and that no decision would be made until the end of 2015. Residents were, understandably alarmed and some expressed a hope that they could stay at Mais House. They were assured of the extensive support which would be in place for them, whatever option was chosen, and that, in the event of a redevelopment, we would work with everyone to find suitable alternative homes. However, some residents immediately approached officers and said they wished to move anyway and would like to take advantage of this opportunity.
25. In May, officers returned to go through the information again and were accompanied by the Chairman of the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee, Virginia Rounding, who was able to provide additional reassurances to residents.
26. In August, officers introduced the architect who had been commissioned to undertake a study of Mais House. She explained the purpose of her work and what she would be doing. Messages about support and timescales were repeated.
27. In October, a further meeting was held in order to keep residents informed. The meeting was attended by Ann Holmes, Deputy Chairman of Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee. This meeting was used to outline to residents the broad options for Mais House as outlined in paragraphs 35-41 of this report, to give more information about support and to explain the decision making process.
28. The May and October meetings were attended by a representative from Lewisham Pensioners' Forum, whom we invite to all meetings to provide some independent scrutiny. This representative has been extremely valuable in giving residents some perspective, in view of the changes taking place across Lewisham, and urging them not to simply reject the City's proposals out of hand.
29. At each meeting, some residents have expressed concern about the future of Mais House and the uncertainty of this period before a decision is made. This, of course, is entirely understandable and officers have enormous sympathy for the residents, some of whom have lived at Mais House for many years. We have endeavoured to be completely honest with them without causing unnecessary anxiety, but it is clear that they need a decision as soon as possible. They have also expressed frustration that major works have not been carried out in previous

years. Again, this is understandable and officers have repeatedly apologised for this failure.

30. At August's meeting, it was agreed that a survey should be carried out to capture residents' views and wishes. The survey revealed that most of the residents feel they have support needs and would prefer to stay in sheltered accommodation. Some residents still prefer sheltered accommodation even if they feel they have no support needs. However, others have expressed preferences for general needs. Although it is clear that many are happy at Mais House, there are a number who are willing to consider alternative accommodation. Three residents stated that they wish to stay at Mais House and would not indicate any alternative preference. Anonymised feedback from the survey is included at Appendix 1.
31. At October's meeting, a resident called for a straw poll asking which residents wished Mais House to stay a sheltered scheme, for older people only. The 31 residents present were unanimous in wishing this. Residents expressed concerns living in a community of mixed ages, with noise and security being cited as potential problems.
32. Although many people express a preference for larger flats, there are a small number who say they wish to remain in bedsits. This would appear to be largely for financial reasons as their rent is not covered by Housing Benefit and they are, therefore, self-funding.
33. In addition to the meetings, officers have held regular surgeries at Mais House. Both the Sheltered Housing Manager and the Area Manager make pre-advertised visits to the scheme to sit and talk to individual residents who wish to discuss questions and concerns with them privately. Many residents have said that they prefer this to the wider meetings, where there is always a risk that one or two residents will dominate any discussion. The officers have been able to offer extensive reassurance and information and have helped some residents who have expressed a wish to move as soon as possible.
34. In summary, the wish of the majority of existing residents is for the minimum possible change and for refurbishment work to take place, with Mais House remaining a sheltered housing scheme.
35. This paper has been circulated to residents prior to your meeting, and their comments and questions invited. Those comments and questions will be provided, in full, to Members either at or prior to the meeting.

Ideas for the refurbishment or redevelopment of Mais House

36. The consultants have, so far, identified ten ideas for what could be done in terms of building work at Mais House.
37. These ideas can broadly be categorised into three options:
 - a. Refurbish Mais House but keep it as a sheltered scheme;
 - b. Refurbish it as a general needs development;

- c. Redevelop the site, building as many lifetime homes as possible for general needs use.

38. At a meeting in October, these options were explained to residents. At that point it was expected that these would be the options presented to Members of your Committee in January. However, in examining the issues involved, it has become apparent that there is a fundamental principle to be decided upon before ideas and options for the building itself can be explored.
39. This fundamental principle is whether or not, in the long-term, Mais House is needed as a wholly sheltered housing scheme or whether it should be changed to a general needs scheme of lifetime homes in order to meet current and future housing need.
40. A decision on this principle needs to be made before further work is undertaken. Once the decision is made, Housing & Neighbourhoods officers can engage appropriately with residents to help them plan, and the Housing Programme Board can then move forward to identify a range of suitable proposals for the work to be carried out that can then be brought back to Members.
41. At this stage, then, the work carried out by Evolution has not been presented, but will be brought to Members once it is complete and the initial decision has been taken.

Proposals

42. The refurbishment and retention of Mais House as a sheltered scheme would, in the short-term, meet the needs and wishes of the people who live there at present. Those residents are, quite understandably, anxious about the future and would seek reassurance that change will be kept to a minimum. They are concerned about the prospect of living in a mixed-age community and have made it clear that this is not the wish of the majority. It is essential that the views and feelings of the residents are considered carefully and taken into account.
43. However, it is also important that Members consider the future and what sort of accommodation will be appealing to people as they grow older. Retaining and investing in accommodation which will not be wanted in the future is a financial risk and fails the many households in desperate need of housing. If Mais House stays sheltered housing but the demand for it continues to fall, then Members will almost certainly be faced with having to reduce the age threshold in the future and make it a mixed-aged community after all.
44. This is, then, a very difficult situation, and one which requires Members to balance their responsibilities to existing residents against the need to provide more homes of types which meet housing need and demand.
45. Further work is needed to look at the different ideas for what building and redevelopment work could be done at Mais House. However, it has become clear that, before this can happen, Members need to make a decision about the

overall use of the site in future and whether it should remain a sheltered housing scheme only, or whether to widen it to include other tenants.

46. Officers therefore, propose that, at this stage, there are three options for Members to consider:

- a. Refurbish Mais House and retain it as a wholly sheltered scheme;
- b. Refurbish or redevelop Mais House as a lifetime homes scheme, with properties made available to general needs tenants of all ages;
- c. Refurbish or redevelop Mais House as a lifetime homes scheme, but make provision through the design and allocations policy for it to be prioritised for older people, rather than including family-sized units.

47. Refurbishing Mais House and retaining it as a wholly sheltered scheme

would be popular with the majority of existing residents and give the least disruption for them. It is the option least likely to require residents to be moved into alternative accommodation (known as 'decanting') other than during the works, and would require the lowest capital outlay.

48. However, this option would not address the problems of poor location, reliance on transport to access local amenities and low demand at Mais House. It does not fit with the City's overall strategy and the requirement for more accommodation to meet general housing needs. It also does not address the over-supply of this type of housing for over 55s in Lewisham. Although a good solution for existing residents in the short-term, it is likely that the question of Mais House remaining sheltered accommodation would have to be revisited in the near future if demand continued to decline and the flats became even more difficult to let.

49. Redeveloping Mais House as a lifetime homes scheme available to general needs tenants of all ages would better meet the City's housing need and that of Lewisham. It would provide a higher number of homes, contributing to the strategies of both boroughs. It could provide homes for families which would be in high demand. Overall, it would be a better longer-term solution for Mais House than leaving it as a purely sheltered scheme.

50. However, it would be unpopular with many of the existing residents, who have made it clear that they would not welcome living in a mixed-age community. Although they would have the option to return, it is likely that the redevelopment would take 2-3 years, so all residents would have to be moved for that period, even if some chose to return with floating support once the new homes were finished.

51. Redeveloping Mais House as a lifetime homes scheme, but prioritised for older people would also provide more homes, thereby contributing to the delivery of the City's strategies and to meeting Lewisham's housing need. There is high demand for one bedroomed properties for people aged 45 plus (who are now eligible under the City's Allocations Policy for these properties rather than bedsits) and for couples.

52. This option has the advantage of addressing some of the concerns of existing residents. As the homes would be unsuitable for families, there would be no children in the community. A Local Lettings Plan could be agreed to prioritise applications from older people, thus restricting the age range of the community further. The nature of the design might also be considered – for example, the creation of a number of units designated specifically for older people, with a separate entrance, to increase security. Residents could be consulted about this as plans were developed.
53. Such provision would alleviate some of the fears of existing residents with regard to living in a mixed-age community and might make Mais House a more attractive proposition for residents who wished to move back to it, with floating support, once it is complete.
54. However, whether provision of this nature was practicable and desirable would depend on whether there was clear evidence that there would be demand for it. It would also be subject to planning agreement from the London Borough of Lewisham, as planners there might be more in favour of family-sized units.
55. The need for residents to move out for a period of 2-3 years whilst works were completed would remain. It is likely that some residents would still not regard this option as desirable as, although the age range of the community would be restricted, it would still not provide them with the wholly sheltered housing that they prefer. These residents would need to be found suitable alternative sheltered accommodation on a permanent basis.

Officer view

56. Given the findings of the Sheltered Housing Review it is the officer view that the work needed at Mais House is an opportunity to achieve more extensive change which will better meet housing need in the future. The decision is, of course, for Members, but officers would recommend the redevelopment of Mais House site as a lifetime homes scheme.
57. However, it is important that everything possible is done to recognise the wishes of the existing residents. Having listened to their views on a number of occasions, we would recommend that Members choose the third option and that plans are made to redevelop Mais House as a lifetime homes scheme prioritising older people.

Recommendations

58. Members are requested to select one of three options.
59. **Option 1: Refurbish and retain Mais House as a wholly sheltered housing scheme for letting to older people only**
If this is selected, the next steps for officers would be to:
- Communicate the decision to residents;

- Develop detailed options for the refurbishment programme and produce costings;
- Through the Housing Programme Board, follow the necessary projects and procurement processes;
- Develop a plan for supporting residents through the works and for making alternative arrangements for housing as appropriate.

60. Option 2: Redevelop Mais House as a lifetime homes scheme with general needs units open to people of all ages

If this is selected, the next steps for officers would be to:

- Communicate the decision to residents and put into place immediate support arrangements;
- Appoint a Project Manager to manage all arrangements and support for residents;
- Develop a Support Programme for residents and bring this to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee for approval;
- Develop detailed options for the redevelopment of the Mais House site as part of the Housing Delivery Programme and seek pre-planning advice from the London Borough of Lewisham;
- Through the Housing Programme Board, follow the necessary projects and procurement processes.

61. Redevelop Mais House as a lifetime homes scheme of one bedroomed units, prioritised for older people

If this is selected, the next steps for officers would be to:

- Communicate the decision to residents and put into place immediate support arrangements;
- Appoint a Project Manager to manage all arrangements and support for residents;
- Develop a Support Programme for residents and bring this to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee for approval;
- Develop detailed options for the redevelopment of Mais House as part of the Housing Delivery Programme, with design features focused on older people, and seek pre-planning advice from the London Borough of Lewisham;
- Consult further with existing residents, people on the City's housing waiting list and the London Borough of Lewisham to explore what features might be incorporated to make the development more suitable for older people;
- Through the Housing Programme Board, follow the necessary projects and procurement processes.

Proposed support for residents

62. Whichever option is chosen by Members, it remains the City's responsibility to provide housing for the residents which is suitable for their needs. **All residents will be offered the opportunity to return to Mais House following work,** although, unless Mais House is retained as a sheltered scheme, this will be with

floating support, rather than an on-site manager, and may not be suitable for more frail residents.

63. If Mais House is simply refurbished as a sheltered scheme, it is possible that, by using the accommodation which is currently vacant, we could reduce disruption and the need to move out during the work. However, we cannot be sure of this – it may be that a temporary decant is necessary anyway. We will make provisional plans for this event.
64. If it is decided that Mais House will become a lifetime homes scheme and extended or redeveloped, we will need to make more extensive arrangements. There will be a range of options available to residents for rehousing them either permanently or temporarily. These will include:
 - a. Moving to sheltered accommodation at Harman Close, Isleden House or the Almshouses in Lambeth. This would suit people who feel that they need on-site support and wish to stay with the City as a landlord but do not mind relocating to a different area.
 - b. Moving to alternative sheltered accommodation in Lewisham. This would suit people who need on-site support but wish to stay in the local area. We would agree a reciprocal arrangement with Lewisham to offer a property to someone on their waiting list for every one of our residents they house in this way.
 - c. Moving into general needs accommodation, either at Sydenham Hill estate (depending on availability) or on one of our other estates. Our Allocations Scheme allows this if a sheltered scheme is being decanted. It would suit people with no or very low support needs (floating support could be offered as needed, but these homes, unless new, would not meet lifetime homes standards so would only be suitable for active and independent tenants). It would also offer people the chance to move to a larger property if they wished, as applicants aged 45+ are now eligible for one-bedroomed properties.
 - d. Moving into new general needs homes on one of our estates. All new homes will be built to lifetime home standards and will, therefore, be suitable for older people. In particular there will be flats available at Avondale Square Estate next year – as these are located next to Harman Close, any older resident could have use of the communal facilities there and would be supported by the Harman Close Scheme Manager. There are also likely to be opportunities for moving into new flats at Golden Lane Estate. These might suit people who wished to move into the Square Mile and be supported by the City's Adult Social Care Team as well as the estate staff. A number of other schemes on different estates are being considered at present. If it is decided to proceed with any of these, they might also present opportunities, depending on when properties became available.

- e. Moving into an extra-care scheme in Lewisham. This would suit people with higher support needs who perhaps should no longer be in sheltered accommodation anyway. The London Borough of Lewisham has already offered us a number of places at a brand-new extra-care scheme and we are in discussion with some residents about this opportunity.
- f. Moving away from London to live in a coastal or rural area. We already operate a scheme to facilitate moves for people wishing to do this, and some Mais House residents have said they wish to take this option.

65. All possibilities will be discussed in full with residents. We plan to appoint a Project Manager (PM), experienced in decanting sheltered housing schemes, to move forward with the Sheltered Housing Review and to work on an individual basis with each resident and, if appropriate, their family. That PM will support the resident throughout the process, from the time that a decision is announced to the point where they are settled and happy in their new home. The PM will explore the needs of the individual with them, working with the local authority and other agencies as needed, to find a solution which meets the needs and wishes of the tenant as far as can possibly be managed. Every effort will be made to keep friends together where this is possible and the needs of the individual tenant will be paramount throughout.

66. The PM will also make all the necessary arrangements for people to actually move, putting in place any support and organisation needed to make the process as easy as possible for the individual. This will include arranging for compensation for those residents who would qualify. For example, residents who have to be rehoused permanently would be eligible for statutory home loss payments (currently £5,300) and disturbance payments for reasonable expenses incurred in moving. Allowances and compensation, where appropriate, will be agreed with Members in advance so that we can give residents clear information about their entitlement.

67. It is anticipated that the decant process would take up to two years, given the need to proceed with enormous sensitivity and to take time and care to find the best approach for each individual. A decant plan created in liaison with Lewisham's Adult Social Care and Housing teams would be brought to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee and this would include a communications programme, agreed in liaison with the Corporate Communications Team.

68. It is worth noting that in most instances where sheltered schemes are decanted for a period, residents offered the chance to move back after works have taken place rarely do so. Usually, despite their fears and anxiety, they settle quite quickly into their new homes and, although liking the security of knowing they *could* move back, prefer not to have any further disruption.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

69. The refurbishment or redevelopment of Mais House contributes to the delivery of the first priority of the City's Housing Strategy, which is to increase the supply of

homes. Within this priority is a commitment to “build more affordable housing on our estates to help City residents and tenants and those in need in neighbouring boroughs, and generate additional funding through sales and rental income for future investment”.

70. It furthermore contributes to the delivery of the Departmental Business Plan Priority 4 – Developing strong communities and ensuring that people have a decent place to live. Within this is a commitment to ‘Build new homes and develop sustainable neighbourhoods’.

Implications

71. Whatever decision is made about the future of Mais House, it will require significant financial investment. The cost of simply carrying out essential work is estimated at £3m. The cost of extending or redeveloping will depend entirely on the scheme chosen, but will be significantly more than this. A redevelopment will require more capital investment, but will also give options for funding, including the potential for developing some homes for sale. Detailed costings and funding plans will need to be developed as part of the next stage of work.

72. The main risk associated with Mais House remaining a sheltered scheme is that, if demand continues to decrease, then the City will have made a financial investment but will be left with hard-to-let properties. This will result in a reduction in income to the Housing Revenue Account. If this happens, the City could mitigate against the risk by reviewing the status of Mais House as a sheltered scheme and extending eligibility to other age groups.

73. If Mais House is redeveloped, the key risk would be reputational damage from having to move existing residents into alternative homes, on a temporary or permanent basis. However, the decommissioning of sheltered housing schemes is now quite commonplace in many local authorities due to a general fall in demand. We would mitigate against this risk by:

- a. Working with the corporate Communications Team on key messages;
- b. Appointing a Project Manager to provide dedicated, one to one support to residents and their families;
- c. Agreeing a support programme with the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee;
- d. Working with the London Borough of Lewisham, our own Housing Needs Team, livery companies and other agencies to identify suitable options for housing residents.

74. There will be legal implications in respect of provision to be made for moving residents from their existing homes. These will be fully addressed in the Support Programme.

75. In terms of HR, there will be a need to appoint a suitably experienced Project Manager on a part-time basis for a period of two years. The cost of this, which is estimated to be in the region of £30k pa can, ultimately, be capitalised and

included in the project budget but, until then, will be met from the HRA and Supported Housing budgets.

76. The Property implications will be managed by the Housing Programme Board. This is chaired by the Director of Community & Children's Services and will assume responsibility for the moving forward of proposals for the building once your Committee has made a decision about the sheltered status.

Conclusion

77. There is still a considerable amount of work to be done before a clear, detailed plan for Mais House is available. Options will have to be fully costed and considered, planning advice sought and the corporate projects process followed. However, first there needs to be a decision about the overall direction for Mais House – whether it is to continue in the longer-term as a wholly sheltered housing scheme, or whether it is to be redeveloped for wider housing use.

78. This decision is important in determining the direction to be taken, but it is also very important for residents. They are, understandably, very concerned about the future of their home and want some certainty. It is hoped that Members are able to make a decision so that they know what will happen next and so that officers can provide whatever support is needed.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Responses to Mais House resident questionnaire, August 2015
- Appendix 2: (to be tabled): Comments and questions relating to the report received from residents, January 2016

Background Papers

- Sheltered Housing Review Phase 1 – report to Community & Children's Services Committee, November 2014

Jacquie Campbell

Assistant Director, Housing & Neighbourhoods

T: 020 7332 3785

E: jacquie.campbell@cityoflondon.gov.uk