



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 6TH DECEMBER 2012

SUBJECT: PROGRESS REPORT – SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 In February 2012, the Council asked tenants to make an important decision about the future of their homes. Tenants were invited to vote in a secret ballot to decide whether the proposal to transfer their homes to a new Housing Association could go ahead or whether their homes would remain with the Council. On 17th February 2012 the stock transfer ballot resulted in a majority vote from the tenants in favour of their homes remaining with the Council.
- 1.2 As part of the offer within its Housing Stock Transfer proposals, the Council promised to provide extra funding for a review of the sheltered housing service and the development of improved services for sheltered housing tenants and other older tenants, following full consultation within twelve months of the ballot, i.e. 17th February 2013.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress to date.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following the ballot process, the Council established two specific working groups involving tenants. The Older Persons Housing Group was established to oversee the review of the sheltered housing service, the consultation process with tenants and to ensure that the views of tenants are taken into account. The second specific working group is looking at repairs and improvements to Council homes. This report looks at the role of the Older Persons Housing Group and the following challenges that the Council has to consider during the review process.

2.2 Supporting People Strategy

The introduction of the Welsh Government's Supporting People Strategy in July 2012 will have a significant impact on the funding available for the provision of warden support services in the Council's sheltered housing schemes. The Council's Supporting People Team is currently working closely with the Public Sector Housing Department to ensure that the sheltered housing service delivery model meets the needs of the most vulnerable tenants. The review of the service will need to demonstrate a future remodelling process as well as being capable of delivering on value for money.

2.3 Suitability and Fitness for Purpose

The sheltered housing review process also takes account of the suitability and fitness for purpose of the Council's 38 sheltered housing schemes. Most were designed and built between 1965 and 1987 and feature a proportion of small bedsit flats, two storey buildings without lifts and, in some cases, unsuitable access for people with mobility problems. Older people today may have different expectations from previous generations, rightly expecting

higher space and design standards, a greater degree of privacy than some sheltered schemes were designed to provide, and more flexible and individualised services. As well as improvements to the service delivery, the physical aspects of sheltered housing need to be reviewed to meet the changing demands of tenants and to ensure sheltered housing is a positive housing option in the future.

2.4 Changing Needs and an Ageing Society

The review also needs to take account of the demographic changes and an increasingly older population. The average age of sheltered housing tenants has risen, with a corresponding growth in their needs. This expansion in the need for care and support may have major implications for the future management of sheltered housing as tenants are more likely to remain in sheltered housing schemes as they become frailer, rather than enter residential care. The demographic changes are resulting in an increasing number of people who are living longer, but with more complex conditions such as dementia and chronic illness.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 This report identifies the need to promote the good health and wellbeing of older people living in the county borough by helping people to live as actively and independently as possible.
- 3.2 The review of the sheltered housing service should contribute to the aims of the following strategic documents:
 - The Local Housing Strategy 'People, Property and Places' aims to provide good quality, well managed houses in communities where people want to live, and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations.
 - Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy
 - Community Safety Strategy
 - Corporate Improvement Plan
 - Community Plan
 - Older Persons Strategy
 - Strategic Equality Plan – Objectives 3, 4, and 5.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 Older Persons Housing Group

- 4.1.1 In March 2012, tenants involved in the formal consultation on proposals to transfer the Council's homes were invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the Older Persons Housing Group. An invitation was also extended to tenants living in sheltered housing or other older persons housing. The purpose of the meeting was to explain the scope of the group and to give tenants the opportunity to determine whether they would like to join the group and be involved in the review of the sheltered housing service and the development of improved services for older people.
- 4.1.2 There are currently ten tenant representatives on this group, some who live in sheltered housing and others who live in non-sheltered older persons housing. A lead tenant has been appointed together with a Lead Officer. Officers in the Tenant and Community Involvement Team also support the group.
- 4.1.3 The Older Persons Housing Group has been meeting regularly since April 2012 and has responsibility for overseeing the review and the consultation process as well as ensuring that the views of tenants are heard.

4.2 Procurement Process and Appointment of Consultant

- 4.2.1 To ensure an independent focus to the process, it was agreed that external consultants would be appointed to assist with the sheltered housing review. Following consultation with Procurement Services, a full tender procedure was undertaken and interviews took place on 3rd and 4th September 2012 to appoint a consultant.
- 4.2.2 The interview panel comprised two tenant representatives from the Older Persons Housing Group together with two Officers and support from Procurement Services.
- 4.2.3 Ridgeway Associates were subsequently appointed as the independent consultants. They have experience of working with organisations in Wales who have already undertaken sheltered housing reviews and fully understand the Welsh context.
- 4.2.4 The role of the consultant is to:
- Assist with the preparation for the consultation process, including the design and content of questionnaires and the preparation of information for the consultation meetings;
 - Participate in meetings with Officers and tenant representatives following completion of the consultation process to assist with the final report due in February 2013.
 - Ensure the outcomes of the review process are aligned to the standards and procedures required for the Council's service to work towards the achievement of the industry standard Accreditation for Housing and Support Services.
- 4.2.5 The consultants will also be analysing the data from questionnaires circulated to tenants, staff and stakeholders during the consultation process. This data will be used to inform the final report.

4.3 Consultation Process

- 4.3.1 Prior to the consultation process commencing, Members were given information on the timetable for meetings in each of the sheltered schemes and were invited to attend as observers.
- 4.3.2 Face to face consultation meetings in each of the Council's sheltered housing schemes commenced on 8th October 2012 and were completed on 15th November 2012. The Lead Officer gave a presentation to tenants at each consultation meeting with the support and assistance of a tenant representative and Tenant and Community Involvement Team Officers. A copy of the presentation and the handout given to tenants are attached for information.
- 4.3.3 The response from tenants during the Consultation Meetings has been very positive. Although slightly apprehensive about any changes to the current service delivery, they have welcomed the opportunity to be involved in discussions at an early stage and have been re-assured that their views and concerns will be taken into account.
- 4.3.4 Consultation questionnaires were sent out to the following tenants on 12th November 2012:
- All tenants aged 50+ living in non-sheltered designated older person housing;
 - Tenants aged 50+ living in general needs housing (30% sample);
 - Potential tenants aged 50+ on the Housing Waiting List applying for older persons housing (30% sample);

Completed questionnaires are to be returned to the independent consultant for analysis by 7th December 2012.

- 4.3.5 Consultation questionnaires were also sent out to all sheltered housing tenants on 19th November 2012 and these are due to be returned to the consultant on 14th December 2012.

- 4.3.6 In January 2013, questionnaires will also be sent to housing staff involved in the delivery of the sheltered housing service, staff in other departments, e.g. Social Services and the Supporting People Team as well as external partners and the voluntary sector.
- 4.3.7 In total, over 5000 people will be invited to respond during the consultation process.
- 4.3.8 Regular newsletters will be sent out to keep tenants updated on progress and copies of the questions raised during each consultation meeting, together with the answers will also be circulated to sheltered housing tenants.

4.4 Sheltered Housing Toolkit

- 4.4.1 Caerphilly County Borough Council has also been involved in the development of the sheltered housing toolkit. This is draft guidance prepared to assist organisations undertaking reviews of their sheltered housing service. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) is leading on this project and the first draft was completed in December 2011.
- 4.4.2 The WLGA in partnership with Cardiff Community Housing Group intend to publish this document but, prior to doing so, have selected four organisations involved in the development of the guidance to pilot the document. These organisations will be reporting on their findings to the Strategic Older Persons Housing Event hosted by Cardiff Community Housing Group and WLGA on 3rd December 2012.
- 4.4.3 Caerphilly has been selected as one of the organisations piloting this draft toolkit and the tenant representatives in the Older Persons Housing Group have also been involved in this process.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Sheltered Housing by its very nature is directly involved with providing services to people from a number of different protected characteristic groups, especially older people.
- 5.2 Arrangements were made for the meetings to be accessible to all tenants who wished to attend and the invitation letter advised that family, friends or carers could accompany tenants who needed some advocacy support at those meetings.
- 5.3 The documentation used to confirm the meetings was printed in large size font and easy to read formats and tenants were also advised that the documents could be made available in a variety of languages and formats on request. Also, hearing loop systems and BSL interpreters were available on request.
- 5.4 For tenants unable to attend the presentation in the communal lounge within their scheme, they were invited to reply and request a one-to-one meeting and where meetings had to be held in a local community centre, transport was provided.
- 5.5 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Eqla process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In relation to the consultancy service and consultation meetings, the costs incurred to date are as follows:

			£
➤ Consultancy Service			
September 2012	3 days at £495.00 per day (excluding VAT)		1,485.00
October 2012	4.3 days at £495.00 per day (excluding VAT)		2,128.50
➤ Printing and Postage Costs for Consultation Documents			4,814.37

➤ Refreshments for 38 consultation meetings (estimated costs)	400.00
➤ Taxi fares and mileage for tenant representatives attending consultation meetings (estimated costs)	1,000.00
➤ Total cost	£9,827.87

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This report has no direct personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 In addition to the formal consultation with tenants, staff, stakeholders, external partners and the voluntary sector organisations, consultation has taken place with those listed below.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That the contents of this progress report be noted.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To advise the Caerphilly Homes Task Group on progress on the Sheltered Housing Review.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Housing Acts and Local Government Acts. This is a Cabinet Sub-Committee function.

Author: Val Parsons – Supporting Housing Manager
(Tel: 01495 235267 – E-mail: parsova@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Consultees: Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer.
Graham North, Public Sector Housing Manager.
Cllr Gerald Jones, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing.
Nigel Barnett. Deputy Chief Executive.
Lesley Allen, Principal Accountant.
Malcolm Topping, Supporting People Manager.
David A Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language)
John Rogers, Principal Solicitor.
Mandy Betts, Housing Strategy Manager.
Gail Taylor, Tenant Participation Officer.
Helene Day, Sheltered Housing Manager.
Older Persons Housing Group

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Consultation Presentation
Appendix 2 Handout for Tenants