

SHELTERED HOUSING - FIRE SAFETY AUDIT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members to consider the results of the Fire Safety Audit recently commissioned by the Council in respect of its twelve sheltered housing schemes across the District.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Sheltered housing provides accommodation for the active elderly, more of a 'safe haven' as tenants grow older. Tenants have the opportunity to expand their social life through the use of the communal facilities and activities run by the tenants. Sheltered housing is not a care home or nursing home as defined in the Housing Act 1985. All tenants have a secure tenancy to their flats, live an independent life and can come and go as they wish.
- 2.2 As a housing provider the Council has a duty to ensure security and safety in its sheltered housing. The measures taken were outlined by the Head of Service in his report to this Committee on 15 July 2004. (Minutes 322/04)
- 2.3 In order to ensure the highest level of safety, Council authorised a Fire Safety Audit to be carried out by an independent contractor with expertise in this field. Inspections were undertaken in September and the results were received in October.

Fire Risk Assessment

- 2.4 The report highlights that the Council is obliged to assess the fire risks and to ensure that steps are taken to meet the risk from fire. In short, this means that the Council should:-
- Carry out a risk assessment of fire hazards either as part of a general assessment of Health and Safety or as a separate exercise.
 - Check that a fire can be detected in reasonable time and that people can be warned.
 - Check that everyone in the building can leave safely, if appropriate to do so.
 - Provide reasonable fire fighting equipment.
 - Check that those in the building know what to do if there is a fire by providing appropriate information and staff training.
 - Check and maintain fire safety equipment.

2.5 The full report runs to 122 pages and a copy has been placed in the Members' Library for information. Generally, the report can be broken down to four distinct areas for further action; these are:-

- **Education and Training**

All wardens to receive basic training in the selection, handling and use of fire extinguisher.

A fire procedures notice should be given to each warden once a year in hard copy and records kept. Wardens to receive regular recorded fire safety training.

- **Housekeeping**

Although overall housekeeping arrangements are good there were instances cited such as tenants notices being placed over warning or help point signs, and unsuitable cupboards being used for storage of combustible items like Christmas decorations.

- **Signage**

This needs to be upgraded to the most modern available - photo-luminescent type.

- **Fire Extinguishers**

Again, the report highlights the need to upgrade certain of the older style extinguishers to the most modern standards and to install additional extinguishers in certain schemes.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The contractors report provides a costed schedule for the supply of equipment and signage. Fitting can be carried out by Council staff.

Scheme	Cost
Bell House, Great Wakering	£1,174
Britton Court, Rayleigh	£1,053
Chignal House, Rayleigh	£973
Frances Cottee Lodge, Rayleigh	£1,431
Goodmans, Great Wakering	£363
Lavers, Rayleigh	£514
Millview Court, Rochford	£423
Pembroke House, Rochford	£425
Romney House, Rochford	£313
Rupert Jarvis Court, Hockley	£456

Scheme	Cost
Spa Court, Hockley	£540
Wedgwood Court, Ashingdon	£1417
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	£9,082
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3.2 The cost of the audit was £175 per scheme, giving an overall cost of £2,100.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 It is important for the Council to maintain the highest standards of safety in its sheltered schemes. It is therefore proposed that all the recommendations of the consultant's report be adopted. Funds of £10,000 were earmarked for digital aerial upgrades within the Capital Programme. It is proposed that this now be used for fire safety works. Members have requested a comprehensive report on digital aerial upgrade before March 2005 so it is unlikely that this money would be otherwise spent.

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That all existing wardens undergo basic training on the use of fire extinguishers.
- (2) That all new employee wardens undergo similar training within the first month of appointment.
- (3) That the Housing Manager introduces a 'fire safety housekeeping' regime to ensure raised awareness to these issues.
- (4) That the fire safety audit report be accepted and the recommendations contained therein be implemented.
- (5) That costs be met from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme.

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Background Papers:

None

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