
FRAIL ELDERLY HOUSING

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the position reached by the Committee in its consideration of housing and support for frail older residents.
- 1.2 Proposals for further research by the Council's consultants are evaluated, together with issues relating to the Council's sheltered accommodation.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 So far, the Committee has received evidence from:
 - The Housing & Support Partnership
 - Castle Point & Rochford Primary Care Trust
 - Essex Social Services
 - Crossroads Carers
 - Age Concern Essex
- 2.2 At an earlier Meeting, Members requested that South Essex Partnership NHS Trust also provide advice and Gaynor Abbott-Simpson, Assistant Director, will be attending this meeting.
- 2.3 There is now a need to consider what further work might be required before the Council is in a position to complete its future Housing and Support Strategy for frail, older people.

3 CONSULTANTS PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Following their initial report, the Council's consultants, The Housing and Support Partnership, have been invited to help the Council further. They have made suggestions on a number of ways in which they might provide further assistance in developing the strategy which could be available in February 2003 for inclusion in the Council's Housing Strategy for July 2003 in line with the timetable in the Corporate Plan.

Option 1

- The Consultant would work with Officers to develop the strategy by meeting from time to time, providing specialist advice and assisting with any specific tasks and requirements. The consultant would provide this on a day consultancy basis.

Option 2

The Consultant would:-

- Map the supply of specialist accommodation against needs at a local level, as the initial report suggested that there is at present a significant mis-match. This task is necessary in order to take a rational decision on location of any investment.
- Establish the voids and lettings of Registered Social Landlords with Sheltered Housing in the District along with their own plans for tackling difficult to let stock and re-modelling services for older people or developing different or additional provision.
- Undertake an option appraisal of the Council's Sheltered schemes. This would include consideration of options for re-modelling, additional development of facilities, physical suitability of buildings, changing services, along with consideration of alternative uses or disposal where appropriate.
- The Consultant has indicated that this work would take between 6-8 weeks.

Option 3

- This option represents the most comprehensive approach. The consultant would take on the whole task of creating an older persons housing and related support strategy. The option includes consultation, costing and implementation planning.
- The timetable to complete this Option would be longer to allow the necessary consultation process to take place. The completion of the strategy is therefore unlikely before Easter 2003.

3.2 The work suggested in Option 2 is valuable and would assist in shaping future investment, remodelling or disposal decisions for each of the Council's sheltered housing units.

3.3 The work proposed in Option 3 includes considerable stakeholder consultation, much of which has already been undertaken, both as part of this Committee's work and during the Essex County Council "Age Matters" Best Value Review. The broad issues and views on the way forward have, therefore, already been identified.

3.4 However, there will be need for some support in producing the strategy, given the limited Officer resources dealing with Housing

Strategy, which are already heavily committed to progressing the Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Housing Management Best Value improvement plans.

4 SPECIFIC ISSUES

- 4.1 The Essex 'Age Matters' review identified the possibility of developing pilot schemes to introduce on-site joint health and social care teams into sheltered housing schemes, and preliminary discussions have been held with County Council and Primary Care Trust Officers to explore this further.
- 4.2 Such a proposal fits well with the broad concept of providing higher levels of care in individual residents' homes, to help maintain independence. This was a point made by the Housing & Support Partnership in their initial report. This also dovetails with the suggestion already considered by Members that promoting independence amongst older people should form one element of a future Local Service Agreement with Essex County Council. The timetable is also realistic with a potential date of April 2003 for the first joint Health and Social Care Team to be in place in Sheltered Schemes.
- 4.3 More detailed work will be carried out to consider the operational and financial aspects of the proposal. This work can progress in parallel with the further research mentioned at Option 2 in paragraph 3.1 above.
- 4.4 As part of their initial work, the Housing and Support Partnership considered the proposals for the redevelopment of the Hardwick House site in Rayleigh. This had been the subject of a bid to the Housing Corporation for funding to build a new older person's housing unit, with conversion of the existing, inadequate building to other forms of housing.
- 4.5 So far, the Housing Corporation has not agreed to fund the proposal but has recently agreed to a joint meeting with Officers and the Housing Association concerned, to discuss whether the scheme might receive their support. The original bid was for nearly £1M.
- 4.6 The Housing & Support Partnership's initial conclusions were that it might be better for the Council to pursue a dispersed model of housing and care for the frail older people, and not consider developing any new-build schemes. However, the fact remains that the current building is not fit for purpose and there may be the possibility of achieving substantial inward investment into the provision of modern older persons' accommodation on the same site, which existing residents could move into.

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- 4.7 This seems to offer a practical solution to an existing and pressing problem and could easily fit into an overall future strategy which might include the remodelling or change of use of other sheltered schemes and the provision of better services to older, frail residents in their own homes in the private sector.
- 4.8 The development of Hardwick House represents a unique opportunity to provide a brand new older persons housing unit on the adjacent site and refurbish the outmoded existing building to provide a range of general needs housing. The general needs accommodation could provide a mixture of affordable housing principally for rent, but also for shared ownership and low cost market housing (potentially for key workers) as identified in the Council's Housing Needs Study 1999. Housing Corporation funding is crucial to the viability of the proposals and efforts will continue to secure appropriate funding as quickly as practicable.
- 4.9 If Housing Corporation funding cannot be secured, the Council will have to consider other options for the site.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council's capital programme cannot finance the substantial costs of refurbishment of the existing Hardwick House to meet modern standards, or the development of a new-build scheme.
- 5.2 Policy and Finance Committee has already agreed that the balance of funding set aside for the original consultant's report can be utilised for further work by them. This is sufficient to provide the consultancy support needed by Officers to develop the strategy, but is not adequate to also fund the research outlined in 'Option 2' at paragraph 3.1. An additional sum of £10,000 is needed if this research, and support in writing the strategy is to be completed.

6 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The strategy to be developed will be of relevance to the whole District. The Hardwick House site is in the Rayleigh Town Council area.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It is proposed that this Committee **Resolves**
- (1) That Officers develop detailed proposals to introduce on-site joint health and social care teams into sheltered housing schemes from April 2003 and these be considered for inclusion in the Local Service Agreement with Essex County Council.

And that Policy and Finance Committee be **RECOMMENDED**

- (2) To consider additional funding of £10,000 for the research outlined in Option 2 in this report.

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Background Papers:

None

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