

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 22 APRIL 2002

REPORT ON: AN ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY FOR OLDER PEOPLE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO.: 288-2002

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1. This report will describe a programme for returning sheltered housing which is hard to let to the Mainstream Letting Pool.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. It is recommended that:

- i. Sheltered housing for which there is no demand should be identified and decommissioned and let as mainstream housing which will improve the range of mainstream accommodation available.
- ii. The rehousing policy for the decommissioning process identified in paragraphs 6.11 to 6.19 is adopted.
- iii. Policy & Plans will liaise with other providers of accommodation for older people through the Community Care Housing Forum with the aim of bringing forward a joint strategy to address the long term accommodation needs of older people.
- iv. A review of the allocation policy for sheltered housing to ensure better matching of needs to the physical attributes of our housing should be carried out as part of the wider House Letting Review.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. Costs can be met from existing revenue budgets.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. Resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised.
- 4.2. Local needs are met locally.
- 4.3. Access to good food, water, shelter and fuel at a reasonable cost.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. Every opportunity is taken to make Dundee a more family friendly and barrier free City, e.g. improvements to buildings, provision of creches.
- 5.2. Any research or needs assessments done within communities and neighbourhoods identifies the particular needs of women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and other target groups, e.g. monitoring statistics gathered by Departments, research commissioned via outside agencies.

6. BACKGROUND

Introduction

- 6.1. This report is a response to the changing demands and pressures being placed upon housing which has been specified for older people. Positive changes in service provision to older people have meant that they are empowered with greater choices. As a result, some sheltered housing is proving difficult to let.

Need Assessment

- 6.2. Projections show that the pensioner population of Dundee is proportionately greater than for Scotland as a whole. This population imbalance is projected to become more acute in the future.
- 6.3. Over the last eight years the provision of housing for older people in all tenures has risen from 4,162 to 4,272, the latter figure augmented by an additional 2,004 community alarms. This increase can be seen in the context of a total local authority stock which has shrunk (owing to sales, demolitions and boundary changes) from 28,728 in 1993, to 19,938 in 2001, and a population loss from the city of approximately 1,000 persons per year (excluding boundary changes).
- 6.4. These statistics hint at an imbalance in the supply and demand for older peoples housing in the city. This suggestion is borne out by the increasing difficulty in letting some of our sheltered housing and reducing waiting lists.

Waiting List for Sheltered Housing 1995 – 2001

Year	Waiting List	Transfer List	Total
1995	969	1,138	2,107
1996	865	1,015	1,880
1997	864	939	1,803
1998	846	772	1,618
1999	732	695	1,427
2000	679	617	1,296
2001	593	513	1,106

Re-Structuring Services for Older People

- 6.5. The accommodation, which the Housing Department provides for older people, is closely linked to the services provided by the Social Work Department. In recent years, the way that Social Work have provided services have changed to reflect Government proposals for the reform of community care. The Older People (Community Care) Working Group led a service review which made a number of conclusions regarding older peoples accommodation.

These are:

- although there is a very large supply of local authority housing, not all of it meets the needs of an increasingly frail population.
- the locality of housing and community safety were very important determinants in the demand for housing for older people.
- other forms of equipment, for example, the community alarm had affected the demand for sheltered housing.

- sheltered housing is a very important community resource which when used will significantly improve opportunities for social integration.

and it was recommended that:

- the communal facilities in lounges should be expanded or adapted to provide increased opportunities for social integration for older people in the surrounding community.

- 6.6. Social Work are extending home care services to allow older people and increasingly frail people to stay in their own homes longer. As a result residential care provision has been reduced.

The ability of older people to remain in their own homes (whether sheltered or mainstream) will depend upon not only the care provision, but the physical appropriateness of their home to their needs.

- 6.7. It has been established that owing to improvements in service delivery, older people now have a greater choice about where to live and the type of housing they desire. It is also true that there is a general over supply of housing for older people (owing to community alarms and H.A. development programmes). In the medium term we need to develop a new strategy for housing older people which fits with the changes in Council services and which meet older peoples needs and aspirations better. In the short term we need to identify which houses have reducing demand and which we need to decommission immediately.
- 6.8. We intend to evaluate our sheltered housing using "At Risk" indicators with considerations of physical suitability which shows that much of it does not meet these criteria. Housing which is not suitable as sheltered housing and for which there is little or no demand will be identified and decommissioned as required.
- 6.9. Some sheltered housing currently does not meet the demands of older people or which is physically inappropriate. It should be noted that though this housing is unattractive as sheltered housing, some of it will certainly be attractive to general needs customers. However, we can also expect a proportion of this housing will be unattractive to anyone and will ultimately have to be considered as surplus to demand. There is a further possibility that demand for some existing mainstream 2 apartment housing will be affected by the release of these additional houses to the general letting pool.
- 6.10. There is circumstantial evidence of low demand for some sheltered flats in the HA sector, particularly in older or bedsit properties. As it is important to ensure a viable sheltered housing stock throughout the city, a joint strategy should be developed in partnership with local Housing Associations and Communities Scotland.

Implementation

- 6.11. If the proposals for decommissioning sheltered housing are accepted, these will cause upheaval for tenants.
- 6.12. It is therefore proposed that the following procedure is put in place to minimise the disruption where no sheltered tenant can be found to fill the vacancy and the decision has been taken to decommission the block.
- 6.13. Area Office staff will contact the remaining sheltered tenants to explain that vacant house(s) are being decommissioned, and that a mainstream applicant will be offered the property. They will advise the tenant that mature applicants will be sought, e.g. single applicants or couples with settled lifestyles who do not have children living at home and

are unlikely to have children in the future.

- 6.14. The Area Office will try to identify a suitable tenant for the vacancy (where possible, this will be a mature applicant), and interview them prior to offering the tenancy to minimise the potential clash of lifestyle problems. As an alternative, the house will be allocated through the Property Shop who will carry out the same process.
- 6.15. The remaining sheltered tenant will be given the opportunity to move to another sheltered property, either now or at a later date. The option for them to move should remain open indefinitely, as their own needs change, or the balance of tenancies in the block moves to younger tenants.
- 6.16. In all cases, where the tenant expresses a desire to move, their application will be referred to the Medical Advisory Service or Single Shared Assessment to have an up-to-date assessment carried out of their health/care needs.

The Area Office would discuss any social/support needs the tenant may have, for example, family support elsewhere in the City.

- 6.17. Moves could either be arranged through the applicant's priority for rehousing, or on a management transfer basis, using the up-to-date medical assessment along with a "social/support" assessment to agree a suitable move. The search for a new house would be City-wide to "core" sheltered stock which would meet the applicant's current or future needs. Letting teams would have to be very flexible in how they deal with applicants and their housing requirements. It is important that elderly tenants are not placed in a position of having to move more than once.
- 6.18. Tenants who opt to move under these arrangements will not qualify for a Home Loss Payment, but Housing Committee is asked to give approval to putting in place some practical measures, and payment in kind to ensure elderly tenants do not suffer financially.

It is suggested we could help arrange removals, and assist with decoration of their new home, pay for telephone re-connection, re-fitting carpets, etc..

- 6.19. We acknowledge that the situation is not ideal, and that moving house is a difficult and stressful experience for anyone. It will be essential therefore that we maintain a high level of contact with tenants throughout the process, and ensure that the option for tenants to move to core sheltered stock should remain open indefinitely.

Summary

- 6.20. This report suggests a managed response to the changing requirements of older people in the community. It will provide a solution which is sustainable for the housing department as a business entity which is integrated with other Council services and thus will help to develop sustainable communities.

7. **CONSULTATION**

- 7.1. All Chief Officers and Dundee Federation of Tenants Association have been consulted on this report.

Elaine Zwirlein
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

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