

Subject:	Review of Seniors Housing		
Date of Meeting:	14 November 2018		
Report of:	Executive Director for Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Martin Reid & Peter Huntbach	Tel: 01273 293321
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Ward(s) affected:	(All Wards);		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 This report sets out recommendations to undertake an appraisal of our seniors housing schemes to ensure that we have the right investment plans to maintain and improve our homes and make sure that they meet resident requirements into the future. This review will be undertaken in consultation with residents.
- 1.2 We are particularly concerned our seniors housing 'offer' ensures our schemes remain a positive housing choice for future residents and we do not find ourselves with properties that we cannot let.
- 1.3 The proposed objectives of this review would be to:
 - Review and address the practical barriers older people face when considering a move into seniors housing. We aim to make it easier for people to choose and to move into seniors housing;
 - Assess the quality of the seniors housing stock against standards of good design for older people's housing. This would include the role of design in tackling loneliness;
 - Make recommendations for the future, including any investment opportunities. The recommendation would include both long and short term measures to improve the stock;
 - Make recommendations for improving the communal areas and gardens not only to reduce the risk of these feeling institutional and dowdy but also to set out how these can be transformed to support active ageing;
 - Provide cost analysis and estimates for future works;
 - Liaise with Registered Providers in the city to review the nature, quality and availability of their seniors housing and extra care schemes to make sure we have an overview of all social housing provision and work together to co-ordinate approaches where possible;
 - Liaise with Adult Social Care to consider potential impacts of approaches toward supporting older people to maintain independence in their own home on demand for seniors housing;
 - Report the outcome of the review to a future Housing & New Homes Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee agrees a review of the sheltered housing stock and service as detailed below, with a report of review recommendations back to a future Committee.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Brighton and Hove – An Ageing Population

- 3.1 85,500 people over 50 currently live in Brighton and Hove with 6500 being aged 85 or over. The city's population is also predicted to get older with the numbers of people aged over 70 predicted to increase by 21% (5,500 people) between 2016 and 2026. In the same period people aged 20 to 29 are predicted to fall by 3% (1,600 people). Although the majority of older people in the city are owner occupiers around a fifth currently lives in social housing.
- 3.2 As is the case generally with an increasingly ageing population, Brighton & Hove's residents will face a number of challenges as they grow older. Health challenges include conditions where Brighton & Hove's outcomes are not as good as those of England including depression and suicide, immunisation, falls, hip fractures, age related macular degeneration, cancer deaths, and NHS Health Checks.
- 3.3 Loneliness is also a key health concern particularly in single person households. The 2016-17, Brighton & Hove Adult Social Care User Survey reported that nearly a quarter of the 441 respondents did not get as much social contact as they would like. A quarter also reported that they did not leave their home.

The Value of Sheltered Housing

- 3.4 The recent parliamentary report 'Housing for Older People' identified that sheltered housing is a valuable asset in the UK and saves £486 million to the national health and social sector in the UK with £17.8 million attributed to reducing loneliness. It identified that such specialist housing for older people remained a popular housing option although there were clear differences between the high-end retirement housing sector and some of the post-war social housing stock which could be in poorer condition and therefore less attractive for many.
- 3.5 The parliamentary report echoes similar findings from the 2017 briefing paper on the value of the sheltered housing sector by the National Housing Federation and the 2010 Frontier Economics Ltd report commissioned by the Homes & Communities Agency which found an investment in specialist housing for older people resulted in a net benefit for the UK, estimated then as £219m.
- 3.6 The recent Green Paper on housing and the new strategy for tackling loneliness highlight the importance of celebrating the positive contribution of social housing tenants and the value of thriving communities. The sheltered housing sector promotes participation and social interaction as recommended within these policy documents.

The Council's Service

- 3.7 The council is the largest provider of sheltered housing in the city, managing 23 schemes including one extra care scheme where on-site carers provide home care (Brooke Mead). The service is named 'seniors' housing' following a recommendation by its residents that the term 'sheltered housing' was too institutional.
- 3.8 The service houses just under 900 older people with 14% of these (125 people) aged 85 and over. Three quarters of residents have identified that they have a disability or long term health condition and a fifth have a social care package.
- 3.9 Echoing the parliamentary report, evaluation undertaken by JB Eventus Ltd in relation to the City Wide Connect programme found the preventative value of the seniors housing service was approximately £8k per person (2014-2016). The service has been an active contributor to the preventative health agenda in the city participating not only in the City Wide Connect programme to address loneliness, but also in campaigns to promote healthy eating, falls prevention and winter flu vaccination. Given Brooke Mead's specialism in dementia care, the service is a member of the local Dementia Action Alliance. Many social activities in the schemes are run in collaboration with local partners such as SE Dance, Fabrica and Open Strings, and are open to older people living in the city. The work of the service in promoting and celebrating active communities and resident participation echoes the positive suggestions for change within the recent Housing Green Paper and strategy for tackling loneliness.
- 3.10 The service remains popular with residents with the 2016 STAR survey finding that for those living in the council's seniors housing satisfaction was 'very high'.
- 3.11 There are approximately 700 older people on the housing register who have expressed an interest in seniors housing and this demand is likely to grow in an ageing population. However, on average it takes twice as long to let a seniors housing property when compared to the general stock. The parliamentary report identifies a number of practical barriers and difficulties older people face when considering moving which may be a factor.
- 3.12 We wish to ascertain how these barriers can be removed or reduced to make moving into seniors housing easier, including consideration of factors such as those outlined below:
- Older people may be confused with the number of terms used to describe the retirement housing sector and that navigating the different housing options can be difficult;
 - The decision about moving and the practicalities of moving for many older people can be a difficult process;
 - The time between someone accepting a property and having to move in is very short, often measured in days or a few weeks. For someone downsizing and/or with physical and mental frailty this will be difficult and put off people from moving. Sometimes it may just be easier for older people to say 'no' even if the property is right for them;
 - The support which is available may appear to be fragmented. Have we a whole systems approach across different teams to effectively coordinate support?;

- Are there approaches we can learn from private sector or registered provider partners to wrap up support into one easy package?
- Feedback from residents, prospective tenants and staff that the poor condition of some empty homes and the stock is also a contributory factor.
- Is the 'feel' of a scheme one of the barriers to letting? Although some internal improvements have been undertaken in some of our schemes, including internal decoration and flooring, others may still feel tired and unappealing. Capital investment programmes may overlook and underplayed the importance of the overall aesthetics of a scheme concentrating on the building infrastructure.
- Communal areas may sometimes be unappealing and the individual flats themselves may also feel undesirable due to the lettable standard. If our seniors housing looks tired and institutional it won't be an attractive housing option.

The Sheltered Housing Stock

- 3.13 All but one of the council's 23 schemes was built between 1967 and 1990. The majority were purpose built as older peoples housing schemes although four were converted from other housing provision. A full list of schemes is enclosed in the appendix.
- 3.14 The majority of schemes are low rise blocks of flats although one is a high-rise with 12 floors (Somerset Point) and two schemes comprise bungalows (Ditchling Gardens and Manor Paddock).
- 3.15 The schemes comprise 900 units of accommodation including studio flats, one bedroom flats, two bedroom flats and bungalows. Over half of schemes have studio flats with the two Whitehawk schemes (Southeast and Walter May House) being almost entirely of this type of provision. Some studio flats have been converted into small one bedroom flats including Jasmine Court, Jubilee Court, Hazelholt, Sanders House and Evelyn Court. Shared bathrooms, once a common feature of the council's sheltered stock, have now been phased out.
- 3.16 Four schemes do not have any lifts facilities to the flats above the ground floor and some have steps inside and outside of the building which means that the facilities are not fully accessible. The accessibility standard of homes was revised alongside other standards following the Housing Standards Review by the DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government) in 2015.
- 3.17 Some communal areas can appear tired and institutional as there has not been a systematic programme to improve or remodel the communal areas including the fixtures and fittings. This contrasts with some newer schemes or schemes in the housing association sector where communal areas appear of a higher and more welcoming standard.
- 3.18 Although the council has invested in some elements of schemes (alarm systems, heating, lighting, lifts and so on) the age of the stock means that there will be a continuing investment need if they are to remain a viable and attractive housing solution for older people, especially where needs of this population become more complex. If the council is to realise the potential savings that the sheltered housing sector can bring, it is essential that we have the right housing for older

people now and in the future. Given the age of the stock some schemes may need fully remodelling or decommissioning in the future.

- 3.19 In addition to the council's stock, there are around 820 units of sheltered accommodation owned by Registered Providers that includes studio flats, one bedroom flats, two bedroom flats and bungalows. Around half of the units are one bedroom accommodation

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Do not undertake the review – if we do not undertake this review, there is a real chance that our offer will not improve or develop and sheltered housing will become the accommodation of last resort for older people, rather than the vibrant, attractive accommodation of choice. Delaying or deterring a move into sheltered housing has the potential of increasing pressures and cost on the wider health and social care sector. Also, not addressing barriers in letting our sheltered housing is likely to result in poorer lettings performance and avoidable rent loss and council tax liabilities.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The service regularly consults with seniors housing residents via scheme meetings and the active Seniors Housing Action Group (SHAG). The way in which we let our homes and the conditions of the empty homes and the communal areas have all been issues which SHAG have asked us to improve on. The recommendation of the report has therefore been driven by the engagement we have had with our seniors housing residents to date. We will continue to work with SHAG and our seniors housing residents so their views are listened and actively responded to.
- 5.2 We will also engage with prospective seniors housing tenants so we better understand what encourages and support older people choose and move into sheltered housing. The service has undertaken some preparatory work in contacting those applying for seniors housing and on the housing register.
- 5.3 We will also engage with community partners to ensure that our service is an attractive option for the diverse community of Brighton and Hove.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 There is evidence that high quality sheltered accommodation, not only enriches the lives of residents but also contributes to significant financial savings for the NHS and Adult Social care. By undertaking this review, we will be able to maximise the use of our sheltered accommodation and ensure the highest quality of support is given to those in need

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report but when the full review of seniors' housing is complete a report will come back to this committee containing full financial implications.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 31/10/18

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report. Any implications arising from the review will need to be assessed in due course.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley

Date: 04/11/18

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will be completed as part of the appraisal process.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 Improving access into seniors housing and removing the barriers and stresses of moving will help contribute to the council's commitment to health and happiness within the City Sustainability Action Plan.

Any Other Significant Implications:

Public Health Implications:

- 7.5 Improving access into seniors housing and removing the barriers and stresses of moving will help maximise the potential of sheltered housing and its contribution to improving the wellbeing of older people living in Brighton & Hove.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. List of sheltered housing schemes with unit numbers and ward.

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None