

COMMITTEE**Agenda Item**

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Sheltered housing stock review		
Date of Meeting:	Area Panels - December 2014		
Report of:	Geoff Raw – Executive Director, Environment, Development and Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Simon Pickles - Housing Stock Review Manager	Tel: 29-2083
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

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

The brief for the sheltered housing stock review was to examine the challenges of the physical environment and make property-based recommendations to ensure our sheltered housing remains fit for purpose into the future and continues to support the City housing strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That area panels comment on the following recommendations, so the comments can be included in the report to housing committee:

- 2.1 Agrees the converting up to 235 studios into one bedroom flats, wherever possible, subject to the required budget approvals, at the same time meeting the Lifetime Homes standard as far as possible. This proposal will be included in the HRA Capital Investment programme 2015-2018 proposals.
- 2.2 Agrees the principle of de-commissioning (closing) of a small number of sheltered schemes which cannot be made fit for purpose, re-designating them for alternative clients groups, or agreeing to redevelop the sites (subject to 2.3).
- 2.3 Notes that business case reports will be brought to Housing Committee on a case by case basis, where recommendations will be made on specific schemes which should be de-commissioned. Each report will include tenant consultation plans, the sensitive rehousing of tenants and the delegation to the Head of Housing to stop lettings at the scheme in question and at nearby schemes (to allow rehousing).
- 2.5 Notes the creation, from 2015/16, of a 10 year cyclical programme for upgrading internal communal and external decoration.
- 2.6 Notes the creation of a budget to address access issues in communal areas (e.g. ramps and stair lifts).

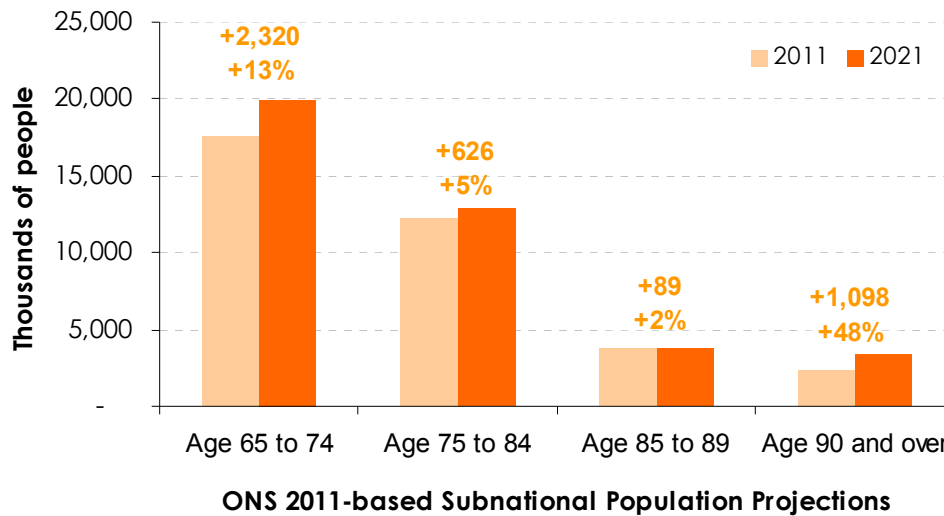
3. CONTEXT

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council owns and manages 850 sheltered flats, studios and bungalows within 23 schemes. In asset terms this is a significant portfolio, providing an annual rental income of £3.2M (excluding service charges).
- 3.2 Sheltered housing plays a crucial role in promoting independent living and preventing or delaying the need for higher dependency services such as extra care and residential care. The service currently houses mainly older people with the support of a scheme manager and alarm service. The service has recently reviewed its aims, which closer aligns the service to the aims and objectives of Adult Social Care and Public Health strategies.
- 3.3 In terms of ongoing demand for sheltered housing – we know from Home-move that on 16th September 2014 there were 795 households on the housing register assessed as requiring sheltered housing.
- 3.4 The council's supply of affordable sheltered housing is supplemented by the sheltered housing managed by registered providers (housing associations) in the City. There are fourteen other registered providers of sheltered housing in the city, providing a total of 908 sheltered flats.
- 3.5 There have been major demographic changes within the sheltered housing client group (longer, fitter lives, and higher numbers of frail elderly people with complex needs). At the time of the 2011 Census there were 35,692 people aged 65 and over living in the city representing 13% of the total population. 20,038 (56%) were female and 15,654 (44%) were male, with the ratio of women to men increasing with age. There is a fairly even split between males and females aged 65 to 74 but as people grow older the ratio changes, with 69% of people aged 85 years and over being female. These ratios are expected to change over the next 10 years as male life expectancy is increasing faster than that of females. In 2021, the ratio of males to females is likely to be 38% females and 62% males

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	Age 65 to 74	Age 75 to 84	Age 85 & over	Total
All Persons	17,460 (49%)	12,248 (34%)	5,984 (17%)	35,692 (100%)
Males	8,537 (55%)	5,243 (33%)	1,874 (12%)	15,654 (100%)
Females	8,923 (45%)	7,005 (35%)	4,110 (20%)	20,038 (100%)

The Office of National Statistics projects that there will be a 12% increase in the number of people aged 65 or above between 2011 and 2021. Within this, there is a projected 48% increase of people aged 90 and above, with an additional 1,098 people taking the number to 3,382.

Brighton & Hove
Age Profile Change



- 3.6 The sheltered housing service has responded by drawing up a new service offer. It is now time to modernise our sheltered housing assets to ensure their fitness for the future.
- 3.7 The accommodation that makes up our sheltered housing portfolio is varied. At one end of the spectrum we have three ‘flagship schemes’ where in the late 1980s careful attention was paid to providing a good range of communal facilities, thereby ‘future proofing’ these schemes. At the other end, in the 1960s and 70’s the council built a significant number of sheltered studio flats with shared facilities, which are now proving unpopular and hard to let. Refurbishment has already taken place to ensure all studios have their own bathrooms and will be completed in 2014/15 This leaves over 200 studios with their own bathrooms, but where the bed is in the lounge. The conversion of these studios to one bedroom flats is a major recommendation within this report.
- 3.8 However, a small number of schemes cannot be made fit for purpose cost effectively. Proposals on such schemes will be brought to future committee meetings.
- 3.9 The internal communal areas on some of the council’s sheltered schemes, despite being clean and safe, can have a tired and clinical feel. Moving forward, tenants are making good use of the Estate Development Budget system to brighten up the communal interiors and make them more homely. However, this is no substitute for a scheduled programme to upgrade decor and furnishings. Such a programme is another key recommendation of this report.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION: MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SHELTERED HOUSING STOCK REVIEW

4.1 The need to address schemes which have studio flats

- 4.1.1 The council still has around 350 sheltered studios flats, where the bed is in the lounge. The presence of studios is a key factor where a scheme has become hard to let. The evidence is that women expect a separate bedroom, whereas men will accept studios more readily.
- 4.1.2 However by allocating properties in sheltered schemes to a different client group (*i.e.* single vulnerable adults with complex needs) rather than to those for whom they were originally intended, we have in some instances changed the nature of the communities and inadvertently generated negative outcomes. Negative outcomes include safeguarding risks and increasing isolation, which both have a detrimental impact on the quality of life of residents and is also costly to manage. The recent Chartered Institute of Housing service review clearly identifies this problem in a number of sheltered housing schemes. Converting studios to one bedroom flats is likely to make them more appropriate and attractive to older people who need sheltered housing.
- 4.1.3 In conclusion, studios are no longer an acceptable form of sheltered accommodation and do not fulfil the objectives of a number of key council strategies, nor the 'HAPPI' all party government task force standards. HAPPI stands for Housing our Ageing Population: Plan for Implementation (see Appendix 1 for summary of the review's self-assessment). It is therefore recommended to convert 235 studios into one bedroom flats and at the same time meet the *Lifetime Homes standards where possible. The total capital requirement will be in the order of £5.9M over three financial years (see financial implications for more detail). In some instances this may result in a reduction of the number of units, which will be quantified on a case by case basis.

* Lifetime Homes standards are a set of features that make housing more functional and 'future proofed'. There are 16 key requirements and specific features. These include:

- Level or gently sloping approach to property
- Wide doorways to allow wheelchair access
- Living rooms at entrance level
- Entrance level toilet
- Low level window sills and electric sockets.

4.2 Schemes which cannot be made fit for purpose

- 4.2.1 There are a small number of schemes where it is not feasible or viable to make them fit for purpose. Reasons for this include: structural or serious repair problems, the absence of a lift, fundamental accessibility issues resulting from

the original design. People know they cannot stay at these schemes as they become frailer.

4.2.2 In these situations the council can consider 'de-commissioning' and designating the scheme as general needs or for fitter older people only, or consider redeveloping the schemes.

4.2.3 If Housing Committee agrees, in future, business case reports will be brought to committee on a case by case basis, where recommendations will be made on specific schemes which should be de-commissioned, including the sensitive rehousing of tenants and the delegation to the Head of Housing to stop lettings at the scheme in question and at named nearby schemes (to allow rehousing).

4.3 Develop additional sheltered housing flats on existing schemes

4.3.1 There may be opportunities in the future to create additional flats on a scheme, at the same time as improving communal areas. This would compensate for the loss of units caused by any de-commissioning of sheltered schemes which are no longer fit for purpose.

4.4. Flagship sheltered schemes

4.4.1 From the mid-1980s the council delivered high quality and well-appointed sheltered housing schemes. The range of communal facilities, including library, cafe area, hairdressing salon, is impressive. The good provision of communal facilities combined with the absence of studio flats, means they have been 'future proofed' and can be justifiably labelled as 'flagship' schemes.

4.4.2 They are: Elwyn Jones Court, Lindfield Court and Sloane Court

4.4.3 The following schemes have the potential to be flagships schemes, subject to investment that is dealt with earlier in the report:

- Elizabeth Court (studio conversions)
- Muriel House (studio conversions)

4.4.4 Where such flagship schemes are used as 'community hubs' (e.g. social or fitness activities), there will be a need for 'progressive security', whereby access to the non-communal areas of the scheme is restricted.

4.5 Accessibility of communal areas

4.5.1 There are some required improvements to communal areas such as ramps and stair lifts, which are relatively minor but which will improve tenants' quality of life. A dedicated budget would address this issue.

5. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 To develop a newbuild scheme instead of converting the studios would cost in the range of £120-£150,000 per flat, purely for the construction works (excluding fees and land). Conversion of existing schemes, where this is possible, will cost approximately £25,000 per flat.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Tenants have been consulted on the converting of studios into one bedroom flats at Sanders House, by holding 'open house' viewings of a showflat.
- 6.2 Sheltered housing tenants will be fully consulted on the redesign of the studio flats, on the possible decommissioning of schemes (once specific schemes have been approved by Housing Committee) and on the implementation of other recommendations of the review.
- 6.3 In previous conversions (creating individual shower rooms) tenants have been able to 'opt out' and not have the works done. It is recommended that this is allowed only in exceptional circumstances and on a case-by-case discretionary basis, such as a serious illness.
- 6.4 In relation to cyclical renewal of communal furnishings, further discussions with residents at each scheme will take place to establish the residents' changing aspirations.
- 6.5 This report has been discussed with the Area Panels and the Sheltered Housing Action Group (November and December 2014).

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 Studio accommodation is not a model of best practice for sheltered accommodation in the 21st century, and the council should develop a programme of conversion to one bedroom flats. However, this will not always be feasible or viable.
- 7.2 The review recommends systems are put in place to ensure improvements to communal decorating and furnishing are cyclical, not one offs.

8. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 Financial Implications:

- 8.1.1 It is estimated that the cost of converting the 235 flats will be £25,000 per flat, giving a total cost of £5.875 million.
- 8.1.2 The funding of the 3 year programme for sheltered housing studio conversions will need to be included in the HRA Capital Investment Programme 2015-2018 budget and funding proposals, which will be presented to Housing Committee for approval, prior to seeking Policy & Resources Committee approval in February 2015.
- 8.1.3 Home loss payments will not be required as part of the studio conversions.
- 8.1.4 The proposed budget to improve the accessibility of communal areas will be set at £25,000 per annum.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen, Principal Accountant

Date: 8/08/2014

8.2 Legal Implications:

8.2.1 The Housing Committee has wide power to manage property within the HRA. This includes the power to demolish. Recommendations 2.1. and 2.2 are therefore within the Committee's powers.

Lawyer Consulted: Joanne Dougnaglo/ Liz Woodley Date: 08/08/14

8.2 Equalities Implications:

8.2.1 Improvements to the accessibility of the buildings will be achieved through the proposed small works and conversion works.

8.3 Sustainability Implications:

8.3.1 The thermal and environmental performance of the converted flats will only marginally be improved, because internal wall insulation would reduce the size of the accommodation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendix 1: Self-assessment against 'HAPPI' standards (HAPPI = Housing our Ageing Population: Plan for Implementation)

Appendix 2: Draft sheltered lettable standard.

