

ANGUS COUNCIL

Housing Committee - 15 January 2004

DEVELOPMENT OF WARDEN SERVICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval of recommendations arising from the Housing Department Best Value Management Review on Sheltered Housing Provision and warden services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended to Members that they:

1. Approve the recommendations of the Best Value Management Review
2. Remit the Director of Housing to
 - bring forward detailed proposals to fully develop the warden service to ensure that it provides value for money and meets the regulatory requirements.
 - develop in consultation with the Director of Social Work & Health Liaison, a service level agreement with Community Alarms to ensure that vulnerable elderly tenants in receipt of housing support services can access a 24-hour service.
 - devise and implement a sheltered housing strategy and report back to committee in due course.
3. Approve the removal of the residential requirement for full time warden staff with immediate effect

2. BACKGROUND

A report to Committee in August 2002 on Supporting People noted a review of warden services would be fundamental to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in meeting the assessed needs of vulnerable people, compliance with the Regulation of Care standards for housing support and, the continued provision of a quality housing support service that remains affordable.

The review was also an opportunity to examine the growing evidence of low demand in some areas and to bring forward proposals for a holistic approach to ensuring the long term viability of Angus Council sheltered housing.

3. SERVICE REVIEW

The review team comprised representatives from Housing (Development, Management and Warden Services), Social Work (Community Alarms and Older Persons Services) and Health.

The following issues were considered:

- A decline in demand for certain schemes

- The effect of introducing a service charge for warden services
- The need to demonstrate best value regarding Supporting People
- The need to remain competitive
- The introduction of regulation and inspection of housing support services.

The review team proceeded to:

- Identify the existing provision of sheltered accommodation available within Angus across all providers and ascertain whether or not it meets both current and future demand
- Identify the current and future aspirations of customers in terms of both the design of accommodation and service delivery
- Identify demand trends and ascertain reasons for low demand within some schemes
- Examine the current interface between Housing and Social Work in providing the service
- Examine how the current service is provided and managed and any associated issues relating to efficiency, effectiveness and economy.
- Identify areas where the service will not comply with the standards for housing support
- Examine all costs associated with providing and managing the service, identifying ways in which to rationalise the service ensuring that it is both competitive and demonstrates value for money
- Consider examples of good practice in providing housing and support for older people
- Benchmark with other local authorities and RSLs
- Consider the sheltered housing service within the wider framework of the Joint Futures Agenda identifying any areas which required to be addressed
- Consider a full range of options for how the service should be provided and managed in the future including delivery by a third party.

A copy of the Best Value Management review has been placed in the Members' Lounge.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementing the recommendations of the review team will result in reshaping the existing model of provision:

- The warden service will have to be reshaped to provide improved management, to delegate responsibility to local levels and, to comply with housing support standards and supporting people requirements
- Housing and support assessors will have to be recruited to ensure that a person centred, needs led assessment process is provided for sheltered tenants and housing support plans developed and reviewed to reflect changes in individual needs, to meet the requirements of the Commission for the Regulation of Care
- The residential status of future full-time wardens taking up new posts should be changed with immediate effect, to address the difficulties in recruiting staff and to improve value for money but continuing to provide dedicated warden cover in line with the duties of the post. Surplus warden accommodation

integral to the scheme will be upgraded to sheltered standard. This will help meet the deficit in 2 bedroom sheltered housing.

- Service aims and objectives on which the service will be assessed and monitored should be agreed, to comply with housing support standards and supporting people requirements
- A suitably qualified and trained workforce is required to deliver a quality housing support service that meets the standards set down by the Ministers.
- A service level agreement with Social Work is required for out-of-hours housing support services, to formalise arrangements and to provide a consistent approach
- A tenants information pack and handbook must be developed so that tenants are fully informed about their rights and responsibilities and are clear about the level and quality of service they can expect
- A sheltered housing strategy is needed to provide a framework for tackling low demand and provide a blue print for long-term sustainable housing and housing support services in Angus
- Further analysis of demand is needed and new monitoring and evaluation protocols to inform future planning introduced
- Following consultation with existing tenants where it is clear there is no sustainable demand, schemes should be decommissioned or re-classified as amenity developments
- Comprehensive plans for refurbishing schemes with long term viability, including local agenda 21 initiatives should be brought forward and should also incorporate plans for one off up-upgrades within schemes with long-term viability
- Opportunities for Social Work and Housing to provide life-long homes and where appropriate, upgrade facilities as required need to be identified
- Opportunities for further cost savings that will provide value for money such as combing housing support services in adjacent schemes, need to be identified
- Supporting People charges should be rationalised so that Angus Council Sheltered Housing remains good value for money and is attractive both financially and physically to current and future tenants.
- More effective mechanisms for consulting and involving tenants and waiting list applicants is needed to ensure they can influence the planning and deliver of services.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that the cost arising from implementing recommendations will be met from the current budget for housing support services. A sum of £1,015,117 at 2001/02 base level, upgraded by 5.0625% for inflation, has been agreed with the Scottish Executive as the cost of warden services. £869,001 has been allocated by the Executive for inclusion in the Supporting People grant in relation to sheltered housing; the balance will be transferred from the HRA or met from charges.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that in following the recommendations contained within this report, the Council would not be acting in any way that is incompatible with human rights.

7. CONSULTATION

In preparing this report consultation has been undertaken with the Chief Executive, Personnel Services Manager, Director of Finance, Director of Law & Administration and Director of Social Work and Health Liaison

8. CONCLUSION

The aim of the review was to define the criteria for long-term sustainability and to bring forward proposals for decommissioning sheltered housing schemes that did not have long term viability, so that future investment could be targeted appropriately. The review failed to achieve this in full and concluded, that in addition to further research to look at the correlation between variables that influence demand, a sheltered housing strategy should be developed to provide a framework for tackling low demand and providing a blue print for long-term sustainability.

The review also sought to identify a structure for ensuring flexible delivery of warden services that could demonstrate strategic relevance in terms of Supporting People and comply with the registration and inspection standards required by the Commission for the Regulation of Care. Implementing the recommendations of the multi-agency review team should improve the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the warden service and ensure the service stands up to scrutiny from Inspectors

Ron Ashton
Director of Housing

Note:- The following background papers, as defined by Section 50 D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to a material extent in preparing this report:

Housing Committee Report No: 876/02: Supporting People - Rent Pooling,
Housing Committee Report No: R888/03: One Off Up-grades to Houses