

ANGUS COUNCIL

Housing Committee – 26 August 2004

ALLOCATION CRITERIA FOR SHELTERED HOUSING SUBSEQUENT TO ONE-OFF UPGRADES TO HOUSES

REPORT by DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval of allocation criteria for permanent moves, by current sheltered housing tenants, within sheltered housing subsequent to one off upgrades.

1. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to accept and approve the proposed allocation criteria to allow for continuous improvement to the sheltered housing stock whilst minimising disturbance to and addressing evidenced housing need of current sheltered tenants.

With the decision making process being, quite correctly, open to scrutiny, it is essential criteria exist identifying how priority has been reached.

2. INTRODUCTION

A report to Committee in January 2004, R49/04, sought approval of recommendations arising from the Best Value Management Review on Sheltered Housing Provision and warden services. The report recommended that comprehensive plans for refurbishing schemes with long term viability, including local agenda 21 initiatives, should be brought forward and incorporate plans for one off upgrades within schemes with long-term viability. Springfield, in Forfar, Murray Court and Balmain Court in Montrose and Airlie Gardens in Brechin were identified as schemes with long-term viability requiring extensive upgrading. Proposals are currently under investigation for other schemes.

There are 23 Angus Council sheltered housing schemes comprising 646 properties in total. The stock ranges in age from 6 to 37 years old with the vast majority of accommodation built in the 1970s and 1980s. There is a need to ensure that the older schemes are upgraded to barrier free standards incorporating design that is suitable for people with varying needs. In addition communal lifts must be upgraded to comply with Disability Discrimination Act requirements.

At the present time a major programme of refurbishment works is being undertaken at Newington Gardens in Brechin. Due to the scale of works required to both individual tenant's flats and the structure of the building, tenants are required to move out of their homes for a period of three months.

Since January 2003 all flats which have become vacant within Newington Gardens have been held to provide decant accommodation for tenants. This was the only option available to ensure on-going provision of suitable accommodation, continued sheltered housing support service to tenants whilst achieving an upgraded scheme.

The work involved in managing and co-ordinating the logistics of this project has highlighted various difficulties associated with successfully upgrading accommodation with an integral support service.

A report to Committee in August 2003, R888/03, identified the benefits in upgrading properties when empty at a change of tenancy to meet the report objectives with the minimum of upset. The report included one-off upgrades to vacant sheltered flats and houses. This is enhanced now with the proposed Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

The objectives of R888/03 would enable the department to meet its on-going objective of upgrading sheltered accommodation through implementation of a programme more sympathetic to the needs of tenants and continued service provision.

This report also noted that tenants already in a sheltered scheme could be offered an improved flat as a transfer allowing the rolling programme of improvements to continue.

The following proposal sets out how potential transfers would be managed.

3. PROPOSAL

The following proposal sets out how priority would be determined for potential "transfer" cases by current sheltered tenants subsequent to one off up-grades. "Transfer" in such situations should cover those with a formal application submitted as well as those responding to the active development situation within a scheme;

3.1 Current vacant properties, in the schemes identified in Item 2, paragraph 1, would be upgraded in the first instance. These would then be utilised as decant accommodation for the duration of the programme. Whilst the refurbishment programme is being carried out lettings of properties to applicants would be frozen.

In consultation with tenants, as many properties as possible would be upgraded through decanting tenants, to minimise the number of permanent internal transfers. However, it is recognised that, due to a variety of reasons, certain tenants may not want, or be capable of coping with a decant. Consequently such tenants would need to be rehoused on a permanent basis into the former decant accommodation. The resultant vacancies would then be upgraded and the properties let to applicants on the waiting list.

Sheltered tenants would be advised that any internal move within the scheme in the first instance would be on the basis of assessed medical need. Sheltered tenants interested in a permanent move within the scheme would require to complete the necessary Special Needs and Medical Assessment form. These applications would then be considered by the Council's Medical Advisor who would determine;

- If there were any medical reasons why the applicant would benefit from moving from their current accommodation to alternative accommodation with the scheme;
- And, if so, what degree of priority should be awarded for such a move

Where there were applicants with the same medical priority then the following factors would be used to determine priority;

- 3.1.1 Length of time on transfer list prior to award, then
- 3.1.2 Length of time in accommodation, for those in flatted accommodation looking to move to upgraded ground floor or cottage, or in dispersed accommodation to integral provision, then
- 3.1.3 Those who have been resident in the scheme the longest, then

- 3.1.4 Where the allocation within the scheme would enhance the provision of accommodation and/or communal facilities, then
- 3.1.5 Where the allocation within the scheme would facilitate completion of the scheme and/or reduce works

Permanent internal transfers could also be made where, although no medical need for transfer is identified, the transfer would not be detrimental to the Council meeting the needs of waiting list applicants and where this would allow the momentum of the programme to be maintained. Under these circumstances the above factors would be utilised to determine priority should there be more than one applicant interested in permanent internal transfer.

- 3.2** Report 49/04 identified the need for a sheltered housing strategy that would provide a framework for tackling low demand schemes and provide a blue print for long-term sustainable housing and housing support services in Angus.

In the instance where a scheme is subject to development which includes conversion of 1.5 and/or 2 apartment accommodation to provide 3-apartment sheltered accommodation and/or enhanced communal facilities then there is a duty to provide suitable alternative sheltered accommodation and to make Home Loss and Disturbance Payments.

Where the needs of more than one applicant within the scheme required to be addressed, as a result of this type of scenario, then the same criteria/process for determining priority as set out in 3.1 would be utilised.

- 3.3** Where transfer to alternative sheltered accommodation would assist in meeting the overall objectives of the project then the same criteria/process as set out in 3.1 would be utilised to determine priority.

4. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The Council's actions will not be incompatible with Human Rights legislation.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To meet the objectives of this report and those detailed in R888/03 (see 2, above), adjustments within Housing Revenue Account capital funds will be necessary. The amounts concerned will depend on the numbers and speed of turnover and implementation. Further reports will be submitted as and when required.

The costs associated with the upgrading of sheltered properties, decanting costs and payment of Home Loss and Disturbance payments will be met from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme.

6. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Law & Administration and Director of Property Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7. CONCLUSION

There is a need to ensure that the sheltered housing stock is improved to meet current standards but this must be balanced with the needs of tenants. Internal transfers within

schemes would be kept to a minimum but where there is significant benefit to the tenant or in addressing the long-term objectives of the scheme then transfers should be made.

The above procedure should ensure transparency where a move occurs.

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: R49/04: Development of Warden Service for the 21st Century

Housing Committee Report No: R888/03: One of Up-grades to Houses