

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 23 rd January 2019
Report Subject	Sheltered Accommodation Review
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council's sheltered housing is for people aged over 60 and the mini-group accommodation is for people aged over 50 years. However, the Council's age criteria is an operational issue, due to our Housing Association partners' criteria being over 55 years resulting in three different age specifications at point of allocating properties.

In terms of our wider sheltered housing stock, a desk based analysis has been undertaken and has provided an overview of all of our sheltered accommodation, which totals 2,633 properties across the county equating to 36% of our housing stock. The analysis has identified a series of issues where some of the schemes appear to be unpopular and as a consequence, have high turnover and void levels which are considered excessive.

Key findings of the data to date is that the primary reason behind the stock turnover (66%) occurs as a result of the tenant's death or their transfer to residential care accommodation. This does not diminish the fact that there are still some significant issues with specific schemes and / or property types, which result in longer term voids and hard to let properties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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| 1. | Comment on eligibility for all mini-groups and sheltered schemes with the intention that they are all brought in line with our Housing Association and Local Authority SARTH Partners. |
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2.	Comment on the scope of an Officer review and suggest any changes they feel may be required.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION REVIEW
	Background
1.01	The Council's sheltered housing is for people aged over 60 and the mini-group accommodation is for people aged over 50 years. However, the Council's age criteria is an operational issue, due to our Housing Association partners' criteria being over 55 years resulting in three different age requirements at point of allocating properties.
1.02	A review of the sheltered accommodation is being proposed within the context of an increasing demand for social housing across Flintshire; an increasing number of people with physical disabilities; and the strategic principle in our draft housing strategy of making the best use of existing stock.
1.03	<p>An initial desk top analysis has been completed, providing a better understanding of our stock.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A third of all Flintshire County Council's stock is deemed as sheltered for people over 60 years, which is a significant proportion of all stock. • The turnover of the stock is relatively low as an average, however certain areas / schemes and types of accommodation (i.e. bedsits) have higher turnover rates. • In terms of wider impacts, it is worth noting, that there has recently been a lot of investment by our housing partners in Extra Care schemes across the County, providing a range of options for people from mini group / sheltered accommodation. For example, we are aware that 17 households have moved from our stock into Llys Raddington Extra Care scheme in Flint, recently with the majority (fourteen) moving from our own sheltered housing.
	Current Sheltered Housing provision

1.04 There are a total of 2,633¹ properties spread across the County that make up the suite of sheltered accommodation of which 533 properties are for over 50's and the balance of 2,100 are for over 60's. This equates to a 36% of all of our stock, the breakdown is set out in the table below.

Description	No. of bedrooms	No. of properties
Sheltered bungalow	1, 2 and 3	1,362
Sheltered Flats	1 and 2	627
Sheltered bedsit		64
Mini-group bungalow	1,2 and 3	394
Mini-group flat	1 and 2	139
Warden House	2 and 3	21
Warden Bungalow	2 and 3	18
Warden Flat	2, 3 and 4	6
Sheltered House	1 and 2	2
Total		2,633

1.05 Looking at the available data over the previous five year period the range of reasons for the termination of properties includes:

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| 1. Deceased | 44% |
| 2. Transfer/move to residential care | 24% |
| 3. Transfer to FCC property | 12% |
| 4. Other* | 20% |

*Other includes a range of 14 categories such as evictions and will be considered in more detail as part of the wider review.

1.06 Further analysis has been undertaken on those properties with higher void frequency rates by site over a five year period and the following graphs show the high level reasons for termination of tenancies by schemes. This will need to be researched further so we can establish a better understanding of all terminations. Furthermore, it should be considered within the context of the rising demand for single person accommodation as a result of Welfare Reform; an increase in the number of households on the Specialist Housing Register; and a reduction in demand for certain types of accommodation by older people i.e. bedsits.

Mini-group schemes (over 50s)

The key finding from the mini-group schemes to be considered in more detail are understanding the reasons for moving to other social housing stock from the 3 schemes above and where people moved to for example Extra Care.

Sheltered (over 60's)

The reasons for turnover are more extensive and less clear for the over 60 sheltered schemes and this will be explored as part of the review and

¹ As at December 2018 – source HRA Business Plan 2019/20

	inform recommendations.
1.07	<p>Each of the properties with higher void frequency rates have their own unique set of issues; however common themes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheltered bedsits are unpopular and tend to be used as a short term temporary accommodation measure. • Upstairs flats eventually become unsuitable for elderly tenants as they become less mobile. • The ongoing reduction of local convenience stores dictates the need to travel for shopping for those who live in remote sheltered accommodation which again becomes difficult for less mobile elderly tenants.
1.08	<p>Analysis of termination data to date shows that bedsit tenancy turnover is significantly different between sites and is less popular with older people as a housing option. The best use of bedsit accommodation may be better suited to meet general needs but again this would be explored as part of the review of specific properties.</p>
1.09	<p>Flintshire Social Services have an excellent track record in supporting older people to live as independently as possible in their own homes and Extra Care facilities; as a result of good community support FCC has the smallest number of older people entering long term residential care. Therefore, the average age of people in care homes is 87 years with the average stay approximately two years.</p>
1.10	<p>There are currently 47 households on Flintshire Specialist Housing Register, this includes people who have disabilities and require accessible housing, such as level access, wet rooms or more extensive adaptations, in order to live independently. It is challenging to meet the needs of these households from our general needs stock and therefore, in some instances where it is appropriate, it would be the best use of existing stock to be able to use sheltered accommodation.</p>
1.11	<p>Financially the projected rental income from occupied sheltered accommodation in 2018/19 will be £11,314,467 to the Housing Revenue Account with a rental loss due to voids of £245,402, which equates to 2.2% of rental income. The review would need to develop a better understanding as to how this can be addressed.</p>
	Conclusions
1.12	<p>Currently Flintshire County Council is the only partner of the Housing Register (SARTH) who have two levels of age criteria for sheltered accommodation, neither of which align with our partner's criteria. All other SARTH partners have a criteria of over 55 years and it is proposed that Flintshire County Council properties align the age criteria with our partners. This discrepancy currently causes operational complexities when allocating, as well as creating confusion for our customers. It is proposed</p>

	we align our sheltered and mini-group accommodation age criteria with our housing partners to reduce complication and confusion for customers.
1.13	<p>It is proposed that an in-depth Officer review is undertaken the scope of which will include:</p> <p>Stage 1: A scheme by scheme review to ascertain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of property types and current use; • Void rates - developing detailed understanding of reasons for turnover; • Developing a series of options for individual schemes with the aim of reducing void rates and ensuring best use of stock; • Produce recommendations for the Council to adopt on a scheme by scheme basis. <p>Stage 2: Assess best use of the stock where there are issues identified as stage 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review of those properties should identify the best use of the stock including whether they should be general needs or consider if they could be used to assist with delayed transfer from care / hospital and reduce costs to the Council. • Consider whether it would be efficient to invest capital expenditure to make them fit for purpose for the future, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of Stair Lifts might be a cost effective solution to avoid the need for tenants in upper flats to move to a more accessible property. • Technology and training to enable internet shopping and other local deliveries, may be useful in supporting those who live in rural areas. • Consider whether bedsit accommodation can best meet changing housing demand and expectations including the reduced demand from older people for this type of accommodation, and an increased demand for single person accommodation. <p>Underpinning both stages of the review, we will need to ensure we are being efficient in the use of our stock, and that it delivers.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Resource requirements, will be determined following appropriate condition surveys determining potential changes to communal and individual properties

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Any potential amendments to properties will be undertaken in consultation with current residents and local elected members.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Financial challenges associated to the scale of capital requirements of modifying the existing layout of communal facilities, will need to be considered as part of the annual housing investment programme.
4.02	Lack of detailed information from departmental colleagues on the level of demand determining potential structural changes to communal properties and facilities
4.03	Access arrangements post consultations with tenants effected by potential structural changes to properties.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Contact Officer: Lesley Bassett Telephone: 01352 701433 Email: lesley.bassett@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) Policy – the regional common policy for all major social landlords allocating social housing properties across Conwy, Denbighshire and Wrexham.