

**Report of Liz Cook, Chief Officer, Housing Leeds**

**Report to the Director of Environment and Housing**

**Date: 17 November 2015**

**Subject: Works to address accessibility issues in communal areas of sheltered schemes**

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Adel & Wharfedale, Alwoodley, Ardsley & Robin Hood, Armley, Beeston & Holbeck, Bramley & Stanningley, Burmantofts & Richmond Hill, Chapel Allerton, City & Hunslet, Cross Gates & Whinmoor, Garforth & Swillington, Gipton & Harehills, Horsforth, Hyde Park & Woodhouse, Killingbeck & Seacroft, Kippax & Methley, Kirkstall, Middleton Park, Pudsey, Rothwell		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

**Summary of main issues**

1. Within the City there are over 4,300 council properties that are specifically designated as older persons housing, spread across 129 schemes citywide.
2. The Care Act (2014) put new duties and responsibilities on local authorities to improve older people's independence and well-being and prevent the need for increasing care and support. As part of the council's compliance with this it is essential that all sheltered schemes are fully accessible to all tenants to enable them to remain as independent in their own home for as long as possible.
3. The number of older people in Leeds is growing and by 2020 it is anticipated that those most in need of care and support, mainly older people aged 75 plus will increase by around 13%. Leeds City Council has recognised that this demographic shift will require substantial investment in its sheltered housing to bring it up to modern day standards and expectations that supports longer term sustainability in these properties as much needed older people's housing.
4. Tenants and staff have identified that a number of elements at schemes posed barriers to tenants being able to access communal areas. Lack of automatic doors, poor toilet

facilities and a clinical feel had left several communal areas being under-utilised and tenants facing social isolation.

5. In addition to this there is also grave concern over the safety of tenants with mobility issues who are struggling to open heavy external and internal doors to gain access to their homes and a loss of dignity in not having access to disabled toilet facilities. These issues clearly need to be addressed to comply with the Care Act (2014).
6. In spring 2015 site visits were undertaken at all sheltered schemes with communal facilities. Following the site visits works have been identified at 47 schemes which include new doors with automatic openers and fobs to external entrances, internal communal lounge doors and mobility scooter stores; ramp access where required and improvements to create disabled toilets. Uninviting and dated décor was also identified at a number of schemes and this work has been included within the painting programme. Any health and safety or fire safety issues identified were dealt with immediately.
7. As older people aspire to be independent for longer there is an emphasis on choice and control and provision of services and homes that are more responsive to individual need. This work will help to resolve some significant accessibility issues within a substantial number of sheltered schemes across Leeds and allow tenants to remain for longer in their home.
8. The Sheltered Support service identified that there was a need for investment in accessibility issues at sheltered schemes so money was allocated from the 2014//15 reserves. Following individual site surveys the total costs of the work have now been estimated at £850,000.
9. Completion of the accessibility works will enable the Sheltered Support service to maximise the availability of the communal facilities and to work proactively with tenants to develop exciting and stimulated activity programmes within schemes, including working with local voluntary groups and services to support activities and strengthen relationships between the scheme and the wider community.
10. The works identified are attached at Appendix 1. .

## **Recommendations**

11. To ring-fence £850k from 2014/15 HRA reserves and use this funding to undertake works on 47 sheltered schemes communal areas to improve accessibility for tenants.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals to complete works to communal areas of sheltered schemes to allow tenants better access and enjoy the use of communal facilities which form part of their home.
- 1.2 Works include new doors with automatic openers and fobs to external entrances, internal communal lounge doors, laundry rooms and mobility scooter stores; ramp access where required and improvements to create disabled toilets.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Within the City there are over 4,300 council properties that are specifically designated as older persons housing.
- 2.2 4,278 properties are designated as Category 2 units which are classed as sheltered housing units having access to Telecare equipment and with contact from a Sheltered Support Officer. These are spread across 129 schemes including 8 high risk blocks, 27 complexes and 43 schemes with dispersed stock with access to communal facilities, usually a lounge, laundry and small kitchen.
- 2.3 Following the transfer of the housing service back into the Council in 2013 there was a need to consolidate the investment strategy for older peoples housing across the City. The strategy sought to identify a consistent approach to ensure that the ongoing investment was based on need rather than geography. In 2014 a strategic option appraisal of older people's Council housing provision was commissioned to look at long term sustainability and investment requirements. Alongside this issues were raised regarding the obsolete Telecare system and fire safety issues relating to the Telecare system and mobility scooter.
- 2.4 The above work identified that a strategy was required to progress work in the following areas:
  - Scooter sheds
  - Shared bathing facilities and bedsits
  - Work to meet the needs of disabled tenants
  - Fire alarm upgrades
  - Telecare upgrades
  - Lift replacement
  - Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) work
  - Communal refurbishment
  - Environmental improvements
- 2.5 Considerable work has been carried out in many of these areas and detail can be found within the Sheltered Housing Investment Strategy, Executive Board Report, December 2015.
- 2.6 This report outlines a proposed programme of work to a number of sheltered schemes which will meet the needs of disabled tenants and provide communal areas that are fit for purpose.

### **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 The Care Act (2014) has brought together previous legislation and put new duties and responsibilities on local authorities to improve older people's independence and well-being and prevent the need for increasing care and support.
- 3.2 1635 tenants live at the 47 sheltered schemes, undertaking this work would allow those with mobility issues or increasing frailty to have better access to communal areas and so enable them to become more involved in communal activities and reduce social isolation in line with the Care Act (2014).
- 3.3 In spring 2015 site visits were undertaken at all sheltered schemes with communal facilities to identify any accessibility or investment issues. Any health and safety or fire safety issues identified were dealt with immediately. The main issue identified was that a large number of communal areas were not easily accessible to a large number of older tenants due to old and heavy wooden doors, no disabled toilet facilities and no automatic opening doors to mobility scooter parks. Uninviting and clinical décor was also identified at a number of schemes and this work has been included within the painting programme.
- 3.4 The Sheltered Support service identified that there was a need for investment in accessibility issues at sheltered schemes so money was allocated from the 2014//15 reserves. Following individual site surveys the total costs of the work have now been estimated at £850,000.
- 3.5 The proposals include for a guest room at Claremont Grove, Pudsey, that has not been used for a number of years due to extensive water damage, to be refurbished and brought back into charge as a 1 bedroom sheltered property.
- 3.6 A full list of schemes and the works to be undertaken is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.7 It is well known that social isolation has a huge impact on overall physical and mental health, and so an important part of this work is to look at the wider role of sheltered housing in providing a community that all tenants feel part of, within the wider community.
- 3.8 Considerable work has already been undertaken by the Sheltered Support service to work proactively with tenants to develop exciting and stimulated activity programmes within schemes, including working with local voluntary groups and services to support activities and strengthen relationships between the scheme and the wider community. This is already proving to be of benefit with many tenants previously not engaged now taking an active part in activities.
- 3.9 Completion of the accessibility works will enable the Sheltered Support service to work with tenants at these schemes to maximise the availability of the community facilities and the range of activities on offer.

### **4 Corporate Considerations**

#### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.2 A number of the works had been identified by tenants at schemes including no disabled toilet facilities and heavy wooden external doors that tenants were struggling to open.
- 4.1.3 Consultation with tenants will take place at each scheme prior to works being undertaken. Ward Members will be invited to the consultation events.
- 4.1.4 A briefing note will be provided to Ward Members outlining specific works in their ward.

## **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 The proposed scheme will meet key Leeds City Council equalities priorities. Specifically these will be to:
- Increase a sense of belonging that builds cohesive and harmonious communities (by improving facilities to encourage activities)
  - Ensure that housing and regeneration investment meets the changing needs of individuals and communities
  - Improve housing conditions and energy efficiency
  - Support adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable to live safe and independent lives
- 4.3 The scheme will have a positive impact the Care Act (2014) has brought together previous legislation and put new duties and responsibilities on local authorities to improve older people's independence and well-being and prevent the need for increasing care and support. 1635 tenants live at the 47 sheltered schemes, undertaking this work would allow those with mobility issues or increasing frailty to have better access to communal areas and so enable them to become more involved in communal activities and reduce social isolation in line with the Care Act (2014). An equality screening is attached to this report which provides more detail.

## **4.4 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

- 4.4.1 The proposals outlined within this report contribute towards the Best Council Plan 2015-20 priorities:
- Delivering the Better Lives programme
  - Becoming a more efficient and enterprising council
- 4.4.2 The proposals also support one of the Council's key breakthrough projects of 'Making Leeds the best place to grow old'.
- 4.4.3 The details contained within this report will contribute to the following best city outcomes:
- Be safe and feel safe
  - Enjoy happy healthy and active lives
  - Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible
  - Live in decent, affordable homes within clean and well cared for places

## **4.5 Resources and value for money**

- 4.5.1 The Sheltered Support service identified that there was a need for investment in accessibility issues at sheltered schemes so money was allocated from the 2014/15 reserves. Following individual site surveys the total costs of the work has now been estimated at £850,000.
- 4.5.2 The estimated cost of work to improve accessibility for tenants at 47 sheltered schemes is £850,000.
- 4.5.3 Research on the effectiveness of fit for purpose sheltered housing in reducing the amount of care or delaying an increase in care combined with an improvement in individual wellbeing has indicated that access to sheltered housing has a positive impact on health and social care services costs, providing value for money benefits as well as an improvement in quality of life for the city's older people. The availability of accessible and appealing sheltered housing specifically for older people can also assist in freeing up larger family homes by encouraging downsizing and facilitate a more effective use of the existing housing stock.
- 4.5.4 Value for Money will be achieved through bulk ordering of items such as automatic external and internal doors.

## **4.6 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.6.1 The Care Act (2014) has brought together previous legislation and put new duties and responsibilities on local authorities to improve older people's independence and well-being and prevent the need for increasing care and support.
- 4.6.2 The proposals contained within this report are not eligible for call in.
- 4.6.3 There is no exempt or confidential information contained in this report.

## **4.7 Risk Management**

- 4.7.1 If the works do not proceed, older tenants at sheltered schemes and within the vicinity of schemes will find using the communal facilities increasingly difficult. Undertaking the work will allow the service to encourage those currently unable to access a building to attend activities at schemes thus helping to combat social isolation.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Completion of the works highlighted will provide Leeds City Council with more sustainable and fit for purpose older people's accommodation.
- 5.2 As outlined above the Care Act (2014) puts a duty on a local authority to prevent the need for increasing care and support. By improving facilities tenants will be able to maintain their own independence longer by being able to access facilities such as laundries and mobility scooter parks.

5.3 By having accessible venues, the Sheltered Support service will be able to encourage a greater number of tenants to become involved in a wider range of social activities that will help to combat social isolation.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 To ring-fence £850k from 2014/15 HRA reserves and use this funding to undertake works on 47 sheltered schemes communal areas to improve accessibility for tenants.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.