

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Inquiry into Older People's Housing

Summary report of the working group meeting held on 1st December 2008.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 A working group of the Board met on 1st December 2008 to consider evidence in line with session one of the Board's Inquiry into Older People's Housing.

1.2 Session one of the Board's Inquiry focused on the following areas:

- Links between the national 'personalisation agenda' and the future development of flexible and bespoke housing related services for older people;
- Implications of the increasing older people population on housing related services and the identification of future planning needs;
- The current review of the Leeds Housing Strategy and its need to respond to the relevant strategic outcomes and priorities within the Leeds Strategic Plan and Leeds Local Agreement;
- The Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy and accompanying action plan;
- The condition of sheltered housing stock in Leeds and proposals for improvement, with particular reference to the Supporting People Programme and PFI bid proposals for modernising housing provision for older people.

1.3 A number of background papers were provided to the working group in preparation for its meeting. These papers are attached to this summary report as follows:

- Appendix 2A - Briefing note from Housing Strategy and Commissioning which responds to each of the areas specified within the inquiry terms of reference for session one;
- Appendix 2B - Executive Board reports relating to the Department of Health Extra Care Housing Fund Bid: 2008-2010 (dated 8th October and 4th November)
- Appendix 2C - Executive Board report on the Public Private Finance Initiative Round 6 - Submission of Expression of Interest (dated 5th November)

1.4 The following Members and officers attended the working group meeting to discuss the evidence submitted:

- Councillor B Anderson (Chair of the Scrutiny Board)
- Councillor J Chapman (Chair of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board)
- Councillor A Blackburn
- Councillor G Hyde
- Councillor G Kirkland

- Angela Brogden (Principal Scrutiny Adviser)
- Rob McCartney (Housing Strategy and Commissioning Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods)
- Phil Charlton (Business Readiness Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods)
- Christine Addison (Head of City Projects)
- Dennis Holmes (Chief Officer – Commissioning, Adult Social Care)

1.5 During the meeting, the following personal declarations were declared:

- Councillor Anderson in his capacity as Chair of the West North West Homes;
- Councillor Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes
- Councillor Hyde in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes
- Councillor Kirkland in his capacity as a member of the Harewood Housing Society and Chevin Housing Association.
- Councillor Chapman in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes

2.0 Main issues raised

The key challenges of delivering the personalisation agenda in relation to older people's housing.

- 2.1 The national personalisation agenda for social care and associated services is focused around enabling clients to design, choose and control the services that they use. It was highlighted that the personalisation agenda encompasses a number of elements (these are set out in Appendix 2A). However, particular reference was made to the Individual Budgets element, where a client receives an indicative funding value, which could be comprised of several funding sources, and uses this funding to purchase services from selected providers, whether they are from the public, private or voluntary sectors.
- 2.2 In relation to housing-related support, which is commissioned through the Supporting People programme, this will be included within Individual Budgets if the client is also in receipt of a social care service. However, the working group was made aware of a number of implications relating to Individual Budgets and the commissioning of housing-related support. In particular, the Supporting People programme block purchases sheltered warden services, by scheme, and this potentially conflicts with the principle of individuals purchasing services and also the concept of creating a genuine 'open market' so that clients have a real choice in how they buy a service. There may also be a conflict between promoting choice and safeguarding vulnerable people as clients may decide to purchase a service outside of the Supporting People commissioned services, which may not have been subjected to the same levels of rigorous testing.

Meeting the housing needs of older people in Leeds

- 2.3 The 2006 Housing Market Assessment had identified that the housing expectations of older people are rising and that this would impact upon the long-term suitability of current service provision. The Government's vision is now focused around supporting more older people to live independently within their own homes. In view of this, the working group noted that there was an expectation for the demand for residential homes to decline in the future.
- 2.4 It was also noted that many local authorities have begun to reconfigure housing related support services for older people, primarily through the removal of on-site warden services and have replaced this with mobile/floating warden provision. However, it was highlighted that such changes have not been universally welcomed and would appear to have caused anxiety and distress to some older people. Whilst it was noted that the Leeds Supporting People Partnership also wishes to see an increase in such floating support services, targeted at older homeowners, private tenants and those living in generic sheltered housing tenancies, particular emphasis was made on ensuring that such a support model does not result in a retraction of service but instead provides greater accessibility to more people. The working group questioned the sustainability of this model and it was highlighted that this will be a key challenge as there are limitations within the Supporting People budget for service growth. The focus was therefore around looking at efficiencies within the service.
- 2.5 The expansion of extra care housing schemes was also anticipated. These are housing schemes designed to offer independent living for residents, with fully self contained accommodation (usually 1 or 2 bedroom apartments and sometimes linked bungalow properties) with access to shared communal facilities often termed a 'resource centre'.
- 2.6 It was reported that the development of extra care housing for vulnerable older people is a key strategic and service transformation objective for the Council. The working group noted that the Department of Health Extra Care Housing Fund 2008 – 2010, with a total value of £80m, offers the opportunity to part-finance such initiatives and details of a scheme currently being developed on the site of Hemingway House, a Local Authority older persons residential home in Hunslet, was provided in the background papers (Appendix 2b).
- 2.7 Reference was made to the Scrutiny Board's planned visit to Sheffield in January to gain an insight into their extra care retirement village. However, a suggestion was made for the Scrutiny Board to also visit existing extra care schemes across Leeds too. The working group also considered it paramount that the views of older people are sought during the Board's inquiry.

Lifetime Homes Standards

- 2.8 Some of the key aspirations of older people, now and into the future were highlighted in the Government Strategy 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods'. This strategy noted a number of key issues and principles:-
- The 75+ age group growing faster than any other, and will be increasingly diverse;
 - Over a million people predicted to suffer from dementia by 2025;
 - Double the numbers of older disabled people in England from 2.3 million in 2002 to 4.6 million by 2041;
 - Plans for the future should focus on independent living within communities, with the right range of specialist housing available for those who need more support, homes at the heart of the community that look and feel like home;
 - Housing to be central to health and well-being with services planned and integrated to reflect that.
- 2.9 It was highlighted that the Lifetime Homes standards will have an impact on the size of accommodation (allowing for wheelchair use and access and space for lifts and hoist in the future), layout of accommodation (allowing for direct access from bedroom to bathroom if required), access to the home and parking space. The working group acknowledged that to meet the standard, new homes would need to be designed and constructed to be able to be readily adapted to meet future needs and for flexibility in use.
- 2.10 The working group also recognised the importance of encouraging developers to meet the Lifetime Homes standard when developing new builds and that this was very much a planning issue. It was therefore highlighted that the Scrutiny Board should invite Planning Officers to contribute to this inquiry.

Adaptations

- 2.11 As more older people are being empowered to live independently in their own homes, the working group questioned the level of support available to private home owners and tenants to carry out any adaptation works. It was explained that whilst the Disabled Facilities Grant (which is currently capped at £25,000 per person) is mandatory and designed to cover such works for private home owners and tenants, this grant is not necessarily efficient enough to meet demand. Adaptations was highlighted as a key challenge and it was noted that the Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care) was conducting a separate inquiry into this issue, which could feed into this inquiry.

Public Private Finance Initiative (PFI) bid proposal for modernising housing provision for older people

- 2.12 The working group acknowledged that the Government recently announced the availability of investment funds for housing under the Public Private Finance Initiative (PFI). This Round 6 of the programme will release up to

£1.87 billion of PFI revenue credits to support suitable housing investment and regeneration programmes. This round of funding covers all the funding available between 2008/09 and 2010/11.

- 2.13 In response to this funding scheme, the working group learned that a jointly sponsored project between the Environment and Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Care has been developed with the aim of creating a network of extra care and affordable lifetime homes in the City to meet primarily the needs of older people, but which will also make a significant contribution to neighbourhood regeneration and achieving affordable housing targets. These new homes will also replace outdated sheltered and residential care housing and fill in gaps that currently exist in provision within localities.
- 2.14 It was noted that an Expression of Interest had been developed in line with the bid timetable seeking up to £271m in PFI credits to support the capital investment required to deliver the new homes, with c£125,000 per annum estimated General Fund contribution over a thirty year contract period.
- 2.15 The overall mix proposed in the Expression of Interest is:-
 - 600 one and two bed Extra Care homes
 - 510 two and three bed Lifetime homes, with scope to include larger units where local needs are identified
- 2.16 It was highlighted that the extra care model included in the Expression of Interest is based on an average scheme size of 60 units, with 60% 2 bedroom accommodation and 40% 1 bedroom accommodation. The working group questioned why the proposal had included 1 bedroom accommodation when the national research indicated a greater demand from older people for 2 bedroom accommodation? In response, it was explained that the proposal was based around the advice of Communities Local Government (CLG) about the proportions needed. However, it was explained that this has since shifted towards 2 bedroom accommodation and propose that all the extra care accommodation will now be based on 2 bedrooms.
- 2.17 Although initial assessments have been undertaken on a range of sample locations, in terms of suitability, location and delivery, they have yet to be the subject of full assessment including user consultation and comparison with alternative sites that may become available within the vicinity. It was noted that this detailed analysis will take place as part of the preparation of the Outline Business Case.
- 2.18 It was highlighted that there were 24 bids submitted to CLG, with two from West Yorkshire (Leeds and Kirklees). The CLG has indicated that it will advise all bidders on the success or otherwise of their bids by the end of February 2009. This will then be reported back to the Scrutiny Board. The working group noted that the bidding guidance from Government indicates that it would wish to endorse the Outline Business Cases for successful schemes by July 2010, which would lead to a programme start by 2013.

- 2.19 In acknowledging the value of the PFI proposal, the working group questioned whether the Council had any contingency plans if the bid was not successful? It was highlighted that whilst the proposed bid for the full £271m would go a long way meeting the aspirations of the Council for older people's housing, alternatives, including scaling down aspirations, would need to be looked at if the bid was not successful. It was explained to the working group that the joint partnership working between Environment and Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Care will always continue to best meet the needs of older people and that much of this work will centre around the Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy.

The Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy and accompanying action plan

- 2.20 The working group was informed that the Leeds Older People's Housing strategy was currently being updated and that this was now being framed around the strategic vision 'creating opportunities for people to live independently in quality, affordable housing'.
- 2.21 It was acknowledged that the updated strategy will seek to strengthen the links between housing services and the 'Health and Wellbeing' vision theme and promote the capacity of vulnerable people to live independently through housing related support, adaptations and assistive technology.
- 2.22 Providing accessible housing that conforms to the Lifetime Homes standard will also be a key goal within the affordable housing strategic theme of the strategy and any actions relating to the PFI bid to modernise sheltered housing provision will be included within the accompanying action plan.
- 2.23 Particular importance was placed on maximising existing housing stock as well as building new homes. Whilst this will primarily be looking into empty properties, the working group learned that the strategy will also involve incentive schemes for releasing properties that are considered to be 'family homes' but which are currently being under occupied. Particular importance was made on ensuring that this was managed sensitively as many of these properties will be occupied by older people who may be wary about leaving their existing home. However, it was reported that there is already expressed interest in such incentive schemes.
- 2.24 The working group was informed that both the draft Strategy and action plan will be available for the Scrutiny Board to consider in February 2009.