

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Sheltered housing stock review</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>Housing Committee - 14 January 2015</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Geoff Raw – Executive Director, Environment, Development and Housing</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Simon Pickles - Housing Stock Review Manager</b>	<b>Tel: 29-2083</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

The brief for the sheltered housing stock review was to examine the challenges of the physical environment and make property-based recommendations to ensure the council's sheltered housing remains fit for purpose into the future and continues to support the City housing strategy in meeting the housing needs of older persons.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That Housing Committee:

- 2.1 Agrees the conversion of up to 235 studios into one bedroom flats, wherever possible, subject to the required budget approvals, at the same time meeting the Lifetime Homes standard as far as possible. This proposal is included in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Investment programme 2015-2018 proposals also presented to this Committee.
- 2.2 Agrees the principle of de-commissioning (closing) a small number of sheltered schemes which cannot be made fit for purpose, re-designating them for alternative clients groups, or agreeing to redevelop the sites (subject to 2.3).
- 2.3 Notes that business case reports will be brought to Housing Committee on a case by case basis, where recommendations will be made on specific schemes which should be de-commissioned. Each report will include plans for tenant consultation and for the sensitive rehousing of tenants, requesting Housing committee's agreement for officers to consult the affected tenants. The results of the consultation will be fed back to a subsequent housing committee for a decision on the future of the scheme.
- 2.4 Notes the creation, from 2015/16, of a 10 year cyclical programme for upgrading internal communal and external decoration.
- 2.5 Notes the creation of a budget to address access issues in communal areas (e.g. ramps and stair lifts).

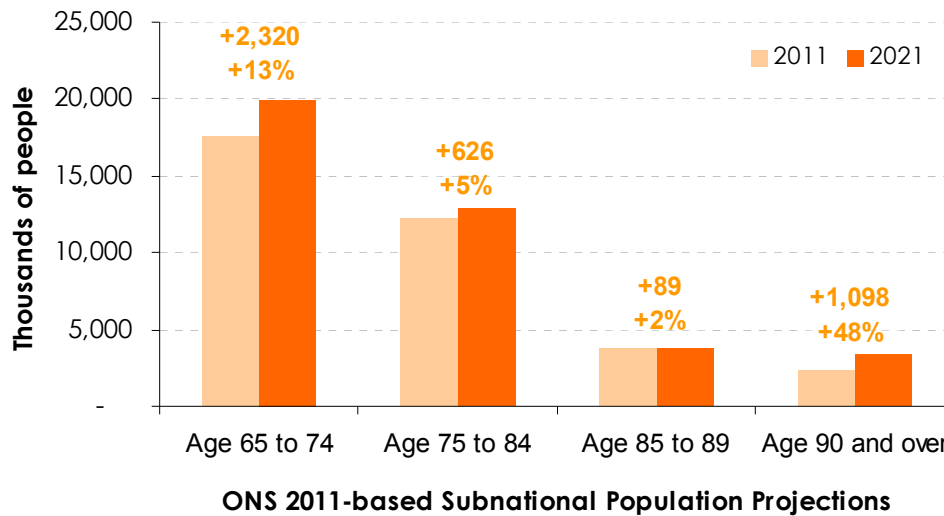
### 3. CONTEXT

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council owns and manages 850 sheltered flats, studios and bungalows within 23 schemes. In asset terms this is a significant portfolio, providing an annual rental income of £3.2M (excluding service charges).
- 3.2 Sheltered housing plays a crucial role in promoting independent living and preventing or delaying the need for higher dependency services such as extra care and residential care. The service currently houses mainly older people with the support of a scheme manager and alarm service. The service has recently reviewed its aims, which closer aligns the service to the aims and objectives of Adult Social Care and Public Health strategies.
- 3.3 In terms of ongoing demand for sheltered housing the Housing Register data showed that on 16 September 2014 there were 795 households on the housing register assessed as requiring sheltered housing.
- 3.4 The council's supply of affordable sheltered housing is supplemented by 908 sheltered flats managed by fourteen registered providers (housing associations) in the city.
- 3.5 There have been major demographic changes within the sheltered housing client group (longer, fitter lives, and higher numbers of frail elderly people with complex needs). At the time of the 2011 Census there were 35,692 people aged 65 and over living in the city representing 13% of the total population. 20,038 (56%) were female and 15,654 (44%) were male, with the ratio of women to men increasing with age. There is a fairly even split between males and females aged 65 to 74 but as people grow older the ratio changes, with 69% of people aged 85 years and over being female. These ratios are expected to change over the next 10 years as male life expectancy is increasing faster than that of females. In 2021, the ratio of males to females is likely to be 38% females and 62% males

Brighton & Hove				
	Age 65 to 74	Age 75 to 84	Age 85 & over	Total
All Persons	17,460 (49%)	12,248 (34%)	5,984 (17%)	35,692 (100%)
Males	8,537 (55%)	5,243 (33%)	1,874 (12%)	15,654 (100%)
Females	8,923 (45%)	7,005 (35%)	4,110 (20%)	20,038 (100%)

The Office of National Statistics projects that there will be a 12% increase in the number of people aged 65 or above between 2011 and 2021. Within this, there is a projected 48% increase of people aged 90 and above, with an additional 1,098 people taking the number to 3,382.

Brighton & Hove  
Age Profile Change



- 3.6 The sheltered housing service has responded by drawing up a new service offer. This has been developed in conjunction with the Sheltered Housing Residents and staff and was facilitated by the CIH (Chartered Institute of Housing). The new Service Offer will be the subject of a report to Housing Committee in March 2015 but essentially seeks to provide accommodation for older people where opportunities to improve health and wellbeing are provided, enabling residents to live independently and remain in their own homes for as long as possible. It is now time to modernise our sheltered housing assets to ensure their fitness for the future.
- 3.7 The accommodation that makes up our sheltered housing portfolio is varied. At one end of the spectrum we have three 'flagship schemes' where in the late 1980s careful attention was paid to providing a good range of communal facilities, thereby 'future proofing' these schemes. At the other end, in the 1960s and 1970s the council built a significant number of sheltered studio flats, some with shared facilities, which are now proving unpopular and hard to let. Refurbishment has already taken place to ensure all studios have their own bathrooms and will be completed in 2014/15. This leaves over 200 studios with their own bathrooms, but where the bed is in the lounge. The conversion of these studios to one bedroom flats is a major recommendation within this report.
- 3.8 However, a small number of schemes cannot be made fit for purpose cost effectively. Proposals on such schemes will be brought to future committee meetings.
- 3.9 The internal communal areas on some of the council's sheltered schemes, despite being clean and safe, can have a tired and clinical feel. Moving forward, tenants are making good use of the Estate Development Budget system to brighten up the communal interiors and make them more homely. However, this is no substitute for a scheduled programme to upgrade decoration. Such a programme is another key recommendation of this report.

#### 4. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** Main Findings of the Sheltered Housing Stock Review

##### 4.1 **The need to address schemes which have studio flats**

- 4.1.1 The council still has around 350 sheltered studios flats, where the bed is in the lounge. The presence of studios is a key factor where a scheme has become hard to let. The evidence is that women expect a separate bedroom, whereas men will accept studios more readily.
- 4.1.2 However by allocating properties in sheltered schemes to a different client group (i.e. single vulnerable adults with complex needs) rather than to those for whom they were originally intended, we have in some instances changed the nature of the communities and inadvertently generated negative outcomes. Negative outcomes include safeguarding risks and increasing isolation, which both have a detrimental impact on the quality of life of residents and is also costly to manage. The recent Chartered Institute of Housing service review clearly identifies this problem in a number of sheltered housing schemes. Converting studios to one bedroom flats is likely to make them more appropriate and attractive to older people who need sheltered housing.
- 4.1.3 In conclusion, studios are no longer an acceptable form of sheltered accommodation and do not fulfil the objectives of a number of key council strategies, nor the 'HAPPI' all party government task force standards. HAPPI stands for Housing our Ageing Population: Plan for Implementation (see Appendix 1 for summary of the review's self-assessment). It is therefore recommended to convert 235 studios into one bedroom flats and at the same time meet the \*Lifetime Homes standards where possible. The total capital requirement will be in the order of £5.4 million over three financial years (see financial implications for more detail). In some instances this may result in a reduction of the number of units, which will be quantified on a case by case basis.

\* Lifetime Homes standards are a set of features that make housing more functional and 'future proofed'. There are 16 key requirements and specific features. These include:

- Level or gently sloping approach to property
- Wide doorways to allow wheelchair access
- Living rooms at entrance level
- Entrance level toilet
- Low level window sills and electric sockets.

## **4.2 Schemes which cannot be made fit for purpose**

- 4.2.1 There are a small number of schemes where it is not feasible or viable to make them fit for purpose. Reasons for this include structural or serious repair problems, the absence of a lift, distance from bus stops and shops, and other fundamental accessibility issues resulting from the original design. People know they cannot stay at these schemes as they become frailer.
- 4.2.2 In these situations the council can consider 'de-commissioning' and designating the scheme as general needs or for fitter older people only, or consider redeveloping the schemes.
- 4.2.3 If Housing Committee agrees, in future, business case reports will be brought to Housing Committee on a case by case basis, where recommendations will be made on specific schemes which should be de-commissioned. Each report will include plans for tenant consultation and for the sensitive rehousing of tenants, requesting Housing committee's agreement for officers to consult the affected tenants. The results of the consultation will be fed back to a subsequent housing committee for a decision on the future of the scheme.

## **4.3 Develop additional sheltered housing flats on existing schemes**

- 4.3.1 There may be opportunities in the future to create additional flats on a scheme, at the same time as improving communal areas. This would compensate for the loss of units caused by any de-commissioning of sheltered schemes which are no longer fit for purpose. Individual reports will be brought to Housing Committee and tenants consulted where this is an option.

## **4.4. Flagship sheltered schemes**

- 4.4.1 From the mid-1980s the council delivered high quality and well-appointed sheltered housing schemes. The range of communal facilities, including library, cafe area, hairdressing salon, is impressive. The good provision of communal facilities combined with the absence of studio flats, means they have been 'future proofed' and can be justifiably labelled as 'flagship' schemes.
- 4.4.2 Where such flagship schemes are used as 'community hubs' (e.g. social or fitness activities), there will be a need for 'progressive security', whereby access to the non-communal areas of the scheme is restricted.

## **4.5 Accessibility of communal areas**

- 4.5.1 There are some required improvements to communal areas such as ramps and stair lifts, which are relatively minor but which will improve tenants' quality of life. A dedicated budget would address this issue.

## **5. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.1 To develop a newbuild scheme instead of converting the studios would cost in the range of £120 - £150,000 per flat, purely for the construction works (excluding fees and land). Conversion of existing schemes, where this is possible, will cost approximately £23,000 per flat.

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Tenants have been consulted on the converting of studios into one bedroom flats at Sanders House, by holding 'open house' viewings of a showflat.
- 6.2 Sheltered housing tenants and ward councillors will be fully consulted on the redesign of the studio flats, on the possible decommissioning of schemes (once specific schemes have been approved by Housing Committee), and on the implementation of other recommendations of the review.
- 6.3 The council will offer tenants such support as is necessary to undertake works to their homes.
- 6.4 In relation to cyclical renewal of communal furnishings, further discussions with residents at each scheme will take place to establish the residents' changing aspirations.
- 6.5 This report has been discussed with the Area Panels and the Senior Housing Action Group (November and December 2014). The main theme to emerge from these meetings was concern for individuals' wellbeing, when a scheme was recommended for decommissioning or when tenants would be asked to move temporarily to allow the conversion works to proceed. Discussion was held about the circumstances in which tenants could decide not to have the conversion works carried out. This is a sensitive area, where individual needs and preferences have to be balanced carefully against the condition and suitability of the current accommodation.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 Studio accommodation is not a model of best practice for sheltered accommodation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the council should develop a programme of conversion to one bedroom flats. However, this will not always be feasible or viable.
- 7.2 The review recommends a system is put in place to ensure communal decorating is cyclical, not ad hoc. The creation of a budget to address access issues in communal areas is also recommended.

## **8. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### **8.1 Financial Implications:**

- 8.1.1 The HRA Capital Investment Programme 2015 - 2018 report, also being presented to this Committee, includes budget proposals of £5.413 million for sheltered studio conversions, as well as £0.060 million per annum under the heading of 'future proofing of assets' for improvements to sheltered communal areas such as ramps and stair lifts.
- 8.1.2 As with all conversions of HRA properties, there will be an adjustment to the tenant's rent to reflect the change in bedroom numbers from 0 to 1 bedroom, resulting in an average increase in rent of approximately £8.50 per week.

Approximately 87% of sheltered tenants in bedsits are in receipt of Housing Benefit which would cover this rent increase.

8.1.3 Home loss payments will not be required as part of the studio conversions.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen, Principal Accountant      Date: 19/12/2014

## **8.2 Legal Implications:**

8.2.1 In taking forward the recommendations in the report, the council must be mindful of the Human Rights Act. The Act provides that a public body, such as the council, must not act in a way that is incompatible with Convention rights. The relevant rights Article 8 – Everyone has the right to respect for private and family life, **his home** and his correspondence, and Article 1 of the First Protocol – Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. (A tenancy is a possession for the purposes of this Article).

8.2.2 Any consultation that the council undertakes must be real consultation. Case law has determined that the following elements need to be present: undertaken at a time when the proposals are still at a formative stage; sufficient reasons for particular proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration, and an intelligent response; adequate time and the product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when the final decision is taken.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley      Date: 02/01/15

## **8.3 Equalities Implications:**

8.3.1 Improvements to the accessibility of the buildings will be achieved through the proposed communal access works and conversion works.

## **8.4 Sustainability Implications:**

8.4.1 The thermal and environmental performance of the converted flats will only marginally be improved, because internal wall insulation would reduce the size of the accommodation.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendix 1:** Self-assessment against 'HAPPI' standards (HAPPI = Housing our Ageing Population: Plan for Implementation)

