

**Meeting of the Executive Members for
Housing and Adult Social Services and
Advisory Panel**

14th January 2008

Report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Review of Hard Wired Sheltered Street Schemes

Summary

1. This report has been produced to examine the options surrounding the sustainability of the current hard-wired street schemes that the council manages, and to seek approval for the redesignation of the properties to general needs housing.

Background

2. The Housing Division has experienced some difficulties with letting street sheltered properties for some time. Life expectancy has continued to rise, the needs and aspirations of older people have changed, and there is growing evidence nationally that older people are delaying their entry into sheltered housing. It has therefore become necessary to review the way the authority uses the stock to ensure it is still viable and provides the type of accommodation that people want. A separate report is to be presented to the Executive Member at another meeting to look at this wider review of sheltered accommodation.
3. The Sheltered Street Schemes were originally built as general needs flats, but were redesignated for older people because of the shortage of sheltered properties in the city at the time. Unlike the traditional sheltered schemes there are no communal areas such as Lounges or Laundry Rooms although each of these properties has a Warden Call unit to alert the Warden or York Warden Call at any time by pendant or emergency pull cord. As these properties are currently designated as part of a sheltered street scheme, when they become empty offers are restricted in the first instance to applicants who are over 60 or who have a medical condition that would benefit from the facilities of a sheltered scheme. It is only if there is nobody suitable on the Housing Register that the age criteria is relaxed.

4. In September 2005 a report went to EMAP seeking the redesignation of the Dale and Swann Street scheme because of the difficulties of letting these properties, with higher than average relet times and numbers of offers as well as less people on the waiting list. This year in Dale and Swann Street there have been 9 properties relet in an average of exactly 3 weeks - a reduction of nearly 4 weeks - and these properties have only had an average of 2 offers compared with 4 previously.
5. The hard-wired sheltered street schemes that this report seeks to redesignate are listed in the table below, and are based in 2 areas - Bell Farm and The Groves.

Scheme	Numbers of Properties
Bell Farm Ave	16
Huntington Rd	4
Jackson Street	21
Lowther Street	17
March Street	9
Middleham Ave	3
Total	70

Consultation

6. Consultation has taken place with Adults Social Services who recognize the need to review the service provision and have no objections to the options presented in the report. Depending on the decision of the Executive Member it will also be necessary to consult with the existing customers, as happened when Dale and Swann Street were redesignated.

Options

7. Option 1 ~ convert from hard wired to lifeline phones
Disconnect the hard-wired systems and offer existing customers a lifeline phone and remove the dedicated warden service. When vacancies occur these would be offered as sensitive general needs lettings.

Option 2 ~ maintain the status quo
Keeping the schemes as they are

Analysis

8. Option 1 ~ converting from hard wired to Life Line phones

The waiting list for hard wired street schemes is considerably less than if these properties were let as general needs. The table below shows the demand for the two lettings areas

Lettings Area	Nos. for Hard Wired	Nos. for General Needs
Bell Farm	24	591
Groves	8	376

If any existing tenants do not have a current landline they would need to pay for line rental if they required a lifeline phone. When Dale and Swann Street were reclassified 26% of the tenants did not have a landline. However, the percentage that did not have a landline *and* who wanted a lifeline phone was 12.5%. This would equate to approximately 8 tenants if this percentage were replicated within these schemes.

If this option is approved then it is recommended that future empty homes be allocated sensitively to minimise the potential for a clash of lifestyles with existing residents. These properties would be subject to the Right to Buy as they would no longer be covered under the exemption - excluding any properties that may have been adapted.

9. Option 2 ~ maintain the status quo.

This would mean that the current problems around letting these properties would continue. The table below shows the average relet times and numbers of offers needed to relet properties over the last two years.

Schemes	Ave relet time (weeks)	Ave no. of offers
Bell Farm	5.4	5
Groves	3.7	3.6

There would also be potential future maintenance issues for the equipment because of its age.

Corporate Objectives

10. This report works towards meeting the following corporate objective :
- Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city.

Implications

Financial

12. The costs relating to the wardens for sheltered housing schemes are pooled when calculating the basic sheltered housing charge in order to ensure equity between schemes. The expenditure budget for these specific sheltered schemes is £30,650 and the income generated is

£41,030. This gives a surplus of £10,380 on these schemes. Therefore if this housing were no longer designated as sheltered housing the remaining sheltered housing charges would need to increase to compensate for this. In future years the estimated basic charges to customers who remain in sheltered schemes would need to increase from £11.86 per week to £12.33 per week, an increase of 47p per week or 4%.

13. If the recommended option is agreed, initially the HRA would meet the cost of Bell Farm and the Groves no longer being designated as sheltered housing and therefore no sheltered charges income being received. This initial cost of £10k can be met from within the existing sheltered housing budgets. In future years, as outlined above, this cost would be met by an increase in charges to remaining customers.
14. The general fund would have an immediate gain and ongoing income of £6k due to the anticipated increase in customers using the warden call service as this would not require the recruitment of an additional warden over and above the current staffing establishment.
- 15. Human Resources (HR)** Currently the Groves scheme has a Warden. However there are vacancies for Life Line Warden posts and so it would be possible for the post holder to transfer to one of these.
- 16. Equalities** There are no equalities implications arising from this report.
- 17. Legal** There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 18. Information Technology (IT)** There are no IT implications arising from this report.
- 19. Property** There are no property implications arising from this report.
- 20. Risk Management** There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendation

21. The Executive Member is asked to agree to option 1
 - convert from hard wired to lifeline phones

Reason: To ensure that the properties remain popular and sustainable in the future.

Contact Details

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Report Approved Date 18th Dec 2007

Bill Hodson
Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Report Approved Date 24th Dec 2007

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *None*

Wards Affected: Heworth, Guildhall

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

**Report to EMAP on options for the future designation of Dale & Swann
Street ~ Sept 2005**
**Options for the future of sheltered housing stock ~ Housing Quality
Network**