

## **BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2010**

### **RESPONSE TO PETITIONERS REGARDING THE ROTATION OF SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME MANAGERS**

Report from: Deborah Upton, Housing and Corporate Services

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#### **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide a further update to members regarding the proposal to rotate Sheltered Scheme Managers every two years. This follows on from petitions considered at Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 January 2010, from tenants at Marlborough House, Longford Court and Esmonde House.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 The proposal to rotate sheltered scheme managers is within the budget and policy framework. It is an operational decision within the delegated authority of the Assistant Director (Housing & Corporate Services).

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The housing service was restructured in 2007. As part of these proposals the existing Sheltered Housing Manager posts were re-evaluated from grade C1 to B1. This reflected the additional responsibilities for tenancy management functions relating to rent arrears and anti-social behaviour. Prior to this change the Housing Officers undertook these tasks.
- 2.2 As part of this change the Director of Community Services at that time advised the Sheltered Scheme Managers that they would rotate every two years from one scheme to another. The decision to rotate Sheltered Scheme Managers at the time was based on safeguarding the tenants and staff in our sheltered schemes from issues of favouritism, bullying and elder abuse, particularly for those tenants who are more vulnerable.

- 2.3 MeRGe (Medway Residents Group) were consulted about the proposal to rotate Sheltered Scheme Managers at the time of the restructure but Sheltered Housing Tenants were not.
- 2.4 The proposal to rotate the Sheltered Scheme Managers was due to be implemented in early 2010 and tenants at Marlborough House, Longford Court and Esmonde House sent in a petition against this proposal.

**3. Advice and analysis**

- 3.1 Further to the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8 July 2010 all Sheltered Housing Schemes have now been visited and the consultation with tenants about the rotation of Sheltered Scheme managers is complete.
- 3.2 The Assistant Director visited all eight Sheltered Schemes to try and obtain a broad view from the tenants as to their wishes. The following sets out the overall consensus from the various schemes:

<b>Sheltered Scheme</b>	<b>View on the Scheme Manager being moved.</b>
Esmonde House	Would like to keep their Scheme Manager but would like to see the buddy system promoted more
Mountevans House	Mixture of views, overall not adverse to the rotation of Scheme Managers
St Marks House	Agree with the rotation of Scheme Managers
Brennan House	Would like to keep their Scheme Manager
Woodchurch House	Agree with the rotation of Scheme Managers
Suffolk Court	Agree with the rotation of Scheme Managers
Marlborough House	Would like to keep their Scheme Manager
Longford Court	Would like to keep their Scheme Manager

**4. Current Position**

- 4.1 The tenants in Woodchurch House, St Marks House and Mountevans House have had a recent change of Scheme Managers so it would not be reasonable to move Scheme Managers around at this time. A current Sheltered Scheme Manager will also be leaving the service shortly and this will mean a further change to the staff managing the sheltered service.

- 4.2 The buddy system of pairing Scheme Managers with an nearby site is already in place and working well in terms of help and support that the Scheme Managers can provide for each other. The cover provided when a Scheme Manager is absent for a day is in the form of a check on tenants in the twinned scheme in the morning. For longer term absence the buddy Scheme Manager will alternate the days spent at each Sheltered Scheme unless temporary cover is required to cover for longer periods of leave or sickness.
- 4.3 As can be noted from section 3 above, the views of the tenants were mixed but the Assistant Director feels that on balance, more tenants were keen for their Scheme Manager to remain than those who were not concerned. There have also been some natural changes to the Scheme Manager Service as a result of sickness, staff leaving etc and this has resulted in the move of some Managers. Therefore the Assistant Director has looked at ways to mitigate any risks to residents of not moving their Scheme Managers, as this appears to be the outcome that the greater majority of residents are seeking.
- 4.4 A dedicated Sheltered Housing Manager has been appointed as part of the recent restructure of the HRA Housing Service, and they will start in October 2010. The Sheltered Housing Manager will have overall responsibility for the management of the Sheltered Schemes and the Sheltered Scheme Managers and will report directly to the Head of Landlord Services. This will ensure that the service is monitored more effectively than before, as the previous management of the Sheltered Service was split with the management of other service delivery functions.

## 5. Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>
Differing Service Standards	Service standards may differ from scheme to scheme if staff stay on one site for a long period of time	The Sheltered Housing Manager will be expected to spot check the Sheltered Schemes as well as the more formal 1-1's that take place with individual Scheme Managers.
Personal attachment to tenants	Sheltered Scheme Managers may form personal relationships with tenants that mean policies and procedures are not adhered to. Favouritism for some tenants may mean other tenants do not receive comparable treatments	Impromptu visits and checks with tenants by the Sheltered Housing Manager will pick up on any inconsistencies in service delivery or concerns with the management of a scheme. Attendance at Coffee mornings and speaking to individual tenants will also highlight if this is a problem.

Personal Attachments to Sheltered Scheme Managers	Tenants see the Sheltered Scheme Managers as the service rather than the service that is provided in each Scheme and become reliant on the Sheltered Scheme Manager.	Through the buddy system and interactions with adjacent schemes tenants will be encouraged to mix together and undertake joint activities. This happens at the moment but needs to be widened
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## 6. Consultation

- 6.1 An extensive consultation exercise with tenants has taken place through visits to the schemes, and individual visits have also been offered and taken up by several tenants.

## 7. Financial and legal implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial or legal implications arising from this proposal.

## 8. Recommendations

- 8.1 Members are requested to note that, based on the full consultation exercise and the risk mitigation factors set out in section 5, the Assistant Director, Housing and Corporate Services, does not propose to rotate the Sheltered Scheme Managers.

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