

SHELTERED HOUSING AND LIFELINE SERVICE TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES at 11.00 am on 6 JANUARY 2010

Present:- Uttlesford District Council Members: Councillor J A Redfern.
Tenant Forum Members: John Maddams
Uttlesford District Council officers: Helen Harvey (Senior Sheltered Housing and Lifeline Officer), Elizabeth Petrie (Housing Management Manager), Rebecca Procter (Democratic Services Officer), Sue Russell (Lifeline Officer), Nicole Shephard-Lewis (Tenant Participation Officer) and Suzanna Wood (Housing Policy and Strategy Manager).
West Essex PCT representative: Gail Walker (Integrated Care Manager for Uttlesford)

SH39 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Karen Patient and Suzanna Westwood, and from Councillors E Bellingham-Smith, J E Hudson, D J Morson and S V Schneider.

SH40 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2009 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SH41 OUT OF HOURS AND WEEKEND SERVICE

The Task Group considered the report of the Housing Management Manager on the Council's sheltered housing out of hours and weekend service. The Housing Management Manager said the recommendations in the report would, if approved today, go forward to the Community and Housing Committee meeting on 21 January 2010. She then took members of the Task Group through the report in detail.

The report gave details of the findings of a consultation carried out with sheltered housing tenants and their families and carers into how the Council could improve the service. Currently a 'one size fits all' service was provided, and the consultation aimed to find out whether a more personalised service could be offered.

The Housing Management Manager drew particular attention to the proposal for a 'Handy Person', which had received a universally enthusiastic response. Currently a great deal of Sheltered Housing Officers' time was being taken up in making requests for minor repairs on behalf of residents. A dedicated repairs officer would enable Sheltered Housing Officers to spend more time providing support for those residents who felt they needed more help than they currently received, and to increase involvement with the wider community.

Regarding the level of support for sheltered housing residents, the Housing Management Manager said it was apparent that there were varying levels of need. Accordingly residents and their carers had been consulted on whether different service levels would be appropriate. Results showed that the majority of service users would still wish to receive a daily visit, but there were those for whom a visit during the weekend was not necessary, due to family or friends being able to call on them. A third option would be for people to receive no visits from a Sheltered Housing Officer, but to have full access to telecare solutions such as pull cords or pendants. As people's needs changed, they would be able to change their service option. All service options would include the Handy Person service.

The Housing Management Manager went on to explain that recruitment and retention of staff for the weekend Sheltered Housing Officer posts had been extremely difficult during the last two years. During the Christmas period only two weekend Sheltered Housing Officers had been available. Current arrangements were not compliant with the European Working Time Directive. The situation was becoming critical, and therefore external service providers had been considered. Following detailed talks with Carecall in Braintree, officers recommended a trial of their community alarm service during weekends and out of hours.

The Housing tabled a costs analysis setting out the costs of employing weekend Sheltered Housing Officers, as against the estimated cost of an out of hours/weekend service which showed an estimated saving of £18,891.

The Chairman asked about recruitment of staff by Carecall. Officers replied that Carecall would recruit from within Uttlesford, to avoid staff travelling from outside the district. Staff would be on standby solely to respond to calls during the out of hours/weekend service. The Chairman asked about monitoring the performance of staff. Officers replied that Carecall were required to adhere to very careful guidelines, and that the Council would monitor them closely.

The Housing Management Manager went on to give details of the different estimated costs for the proposed service options. The service providing daily visits would be £14.13 per week; the service providing weekday visits only would be £12.50 per week; and the service providing access to Carecall would be £10.00 per week. Whilst these figures were estimates, there was no intention to increase the top level by more than the increase due to take place in April. She concluded that a review was essential, the last one having taken place nine years ago, and that regular monitoring of the sheltered housing service was necessary.

Task Group members discussed the proposals further. The Chairman said she thought the proposals were good, and that the provision of a Handy Person was an improvement. She invited other members of the

Group to comment. Mr Maddams said he was very pleased with the report.

RECOMMENDED to Community and Housing Committee that the Council's Housing Service should

- 1 Implement a more personalised level of housing support to service users based on three levels of support, as detailed in the report to Committee, and including the provision of a 'Handy Person';
- 2 Implement a full out of hours and weekend response service to all Sheltered Housing Tenants and Lifeline subscribers by Carecall, on a trial basis for one year.

SH42

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting would be on Friday 26 February at 10 am in the Council Offices, Saffron Walden.

The meeting ended at 10.35 am.