

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
INDIVIDUALS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE  
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford  
22 June 2017 (7.00 - 9.00 pm)**

**Present:**

Councillors Linda Trew (Vice-Chair), Ray Best (Chairman), Linda Hawthorn, Patricia Rumble and Roger Westwood

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Keith Roberts and Councillor John Wood

**1 MINUTES**

There were no disclosures of interest.

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 25 April 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**2 OLDER PEOPLE'S HOUSING STRATEGY**

The Director of Housing Services offered his apologies for his being unable to attend the previous meeting of the Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee were presented with a number of reports concerning older people's housing that had previously been agreed by Cabinet. The latest copies of Council magazines – Sheltered Times and At The Heart were also provided in order to show more recent updates.

The older people's housing strategy had identified an under provision of extra care sheltered housing and of housing for people with dementia. The Council's existing sheltered housing stock had also been found to have too high a proportion of bed-sit accommodation. Many sheltered housing schemes also did not have lifts or were otherwise not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. External communal space such as gardens was also not fit for purpose in some cases.

Five schemes had been selected for regeneration. Maygreen Crescent had not proven popular as a sheltered scheme and the remaining residents would be moved out. The Serena, Solar and Sunrise blocks in South Hornchurch would be redeveloped as an older person's village with approximately 150 homes. A consultation exercise re this scheme was currently in progress.

It was clarified that a private older person's development was expected to be built in central Romford. It was also hoped to reprovide sheltered housing on the Royal Jubilee Court site. There were around 52 people currently living at this site but there were also approximately 40 bedsits on site that could not be let out.

Dreywood Court in Gidea Park was considered a very good sheltered housing scheme and it was suggested that the Sub-Committee should undertake a visit to this scheme. This sort of scheme worked on allowing people to remain in a sheltered home as their needs increased over time. This reduced the need for residential care, helping individuals and also saving money for the Council.

It was clarified that, for those properties available on social rents, tenants must have lived in the borough for at least six years. Discretion could be used in cases of, for example, older people facing hardship. People from outside the borough would not be ruled out as tenants but the aim was to have older people occupying the units as this would also increase the availability of family accommodation within Havering.

The Delderfield House scheme would be redeveloped as this was too small to operate as a sheltered unit. The Ravenscourt block would be kept as this had proven popular but the remainder of Dell Court would be demolished and reprovided as older people's accommodation.

The location of new properties for block housing would depend on where people wished to go and a decant assessment would be carried out for each resident.

It was noted that there were a lot of younger, active older people in sheltered housing units in Havering. People would be guaranteed the right of return to a similar location for each site and efforts would also be made to move friendship groups together. Some people would also choose to move out of the borough for family reasons etc. The existing blocks would be used, prior to demolition, as temporary accommodation for homeless people but this would not happen until all existing residents had moved out.

There were very strict rules on who was accepted as homeless and a person who had been made homeless due to their own behaviour would not normally be accepted. Homeless tenants could also be evicted if necessary.

Occupancy checks had been carried out on all tenants and more than 40 illegal sub-lets had been recovered. Fraud checks were also carried out on people presenting as homeless and anti-fraud activity would be publicised more widely.

There would also be a £4.7 million investment over the next two years in existing sheltered housing schemes. This would cover areas such as the

installation of lifts, CCTV and washing machines. Lifts would be installed in all blocks of two stories or more with stairlifts installed if necessary.

The contract for the new scheme had been launched in May and it was planned to submit a Cabinet report by January 2018 with planning applications prepared by July 2018. All building work would be completed within 10-12 years via a joint venture with one preferred partner. Both the Council and the partner organisation would have to agree on decisions and the partner company would be expected to guarantee the quality of the build.

The total investment in the 12 estates would be £750m - £1bn covering all housing regeneration, not just sheltered schemes.

The Sub-Committee noted the update and information presented.

### **3 HOSTELS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

It was confirmed that there were three hostels in Havering: Will Perrin Court with 46 rooms, Abercrombie House with 37 rooms and Queen Street Villas with 12 rooms. There were approximately 250-300 people living in the three hostels. The hostels had recently been reviewed by the Chartered Institute of Housing which had made a number of recommendations including changing the role of staff.

Experienced staff had therefore now been recruited and residents were now given risk assessments and support plans as well as many other programmes being available. A total of 159 children lived in the centres which was challenging and officers worked with sports teams and children's centres etc. to ensure opportunities were available.

Most hostel residents were already living in the Havering area and had come to the hostels due to increased costs of rent. The hostels service was represented on the Managing Domestic Violence group. It was not possible to give tenant families separate units but double units would be used where possible. Communal rooms in the hostels could be used as study rooms and officers agreed that more computers in hostels would be a positive development.

Fold out tables had been supplied so that residents had somewhere to eat and many Christmas gifts were received for children resident in the hostels.

The average time spent by people in hostels had reduced to 3-4 months. Hostel residents still had to bid for housing accommodation and assistance could be given to do this via computer. New hostel residents were given a welcome pack including a duvet, pillow, cutlery and food items. It was

suggested that it would be useful to arrange a visit to Abercrombie House in order to view the improvements that had taken place.

The design out crime officer had visited all three sites and suggested improvements such as the installation of high hedges which would be carried out. Injunctions had been taken out to prevent e.g. violent ex-partners from entering hostels and the Police would be called if necessary.

The Director of Housing Services recorded his thanks to the housing officer for her work overseeing the improvements to hostels.

The Sub-Committee:

1. Noted the progress made to date in the hostel service following the housing restructure that came into effect on 4 April 2016.
2. Noted the positive feedback by the Chartered Institute of Housing following their inspection on 7 to 9 December 2016.
3. Noted that a draft action plan for improving the hostel service will be agreed with the Chartered Institute of Housing and will form the basis of a further review in January 2018.
4. Agreed that a visit should be arranged to the Abercrombie House hostel.

#### **4 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

It was noted that, of the 12 performance indicators under the Sub-committee's remit, 10 had a green rating and only 2 had a red rating. One of these concerned the rate of permanent admissions to homes for older people. This target had been missed but this was due to more people being able to remain in their own homes for longer but that now needed residential care. There were sufficient places available with approximately 40 care homes in Havering, offering around 1,600 beds. The average age an older person entered a care home was now 87 years old.

Performance on the proportion of adults with learning disabilities living in their own home or with family had been good. This had been assisted by the opening of six self-contained flats for adults with learning disabilities or autism at Great Charter Close and it was suggested that the Sub-Committee should visit this development. It was the Council's responsibility to fund care of this kind although in this instance, 50% of the costs were paid by the NHS. Officers would provide a summary of high cost placements that the Council funded.

Performance on the numbers of people with mental health issues who were in paid employment had also been good.

The use of direct payments was closely monitored and officers were keen to increase take-up as direct payments allowed more choice and control by the person receiving care. Some service users chose to undertake the associated record keeping themselves or this could be done by a third party.

It was expected that take up of direct payments would increase in future years and targets for this had been established via bench marking with the Local Government Association. The Council wished to develop a personal assistant market to provide care services purchased with direct payments. Other ways to make direct payments more attractive to people included the introduction of a payment card to make the use of direct payments easier. This also allowed better monitoring of expenditure by the Council.

It was clarified that there were a total of 28 reablement flats in Royal Jubilee Court but occupancy of these had been very low as people preferred to return to their own homes. This was consistent with officers' aim to have people in hospital for as short a time as possible. The discharge process at Queen's Hospital had also now improved.

Officers would supply suggestions for performance indicators that could be monitored by the Sub-Committee but possible options included figures for the admission to residential care of older people and the take-up of direct payments.

The Sub-Committee noted the performance information.

## **5 SUB-COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

The Sub-Committee agreed its annual report 2016-17 and further agreed that this should be referred to full Council.

## **6 SUB-COMMITTEE'S WORK PLAN 2017-18**

The Sub-Committee agreed the work plan as presented and also agreed in outline a programme of visits including to the Abercrombie House Hostel, the Great Charter Close development and the Avelon Centre for learning disabilities.

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**Chairman**