

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**HOUSING COMMITTEE - 21 MARCH 2007**  
**THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME**

**Joint Report by the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services and the  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise members of the continuing changes to the Supporting People Programme, the numbers of service users that benefit from Supporting People funding; to seek authority to implement revised financial arrangements; and to seek authority to re-designate sheltered housing in line with the recommendations of the Best Value Review of Sheltered Housing.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Previous reports to Committee have detailed the policy background to the Supporting People Programme together with the funding being made available to the Council.

**3. 2007/2008 FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS**

- 3.1 As previously reported to the Committee, the Scottish Executive's Supporting People Grant allocation to East Ayrshire Council will increase to £7.609M for 2007/8. Together with a continuing Housing Revenue Account contribution for protected tenants (pre 2003 tenants entitled to a free service) and charging income from service users, it is expected that some £7.8M will be available from Supporting People funds in 2007/8 compared to some £6.7M for 2006/7.
- 3.2 The Scottish Executive is using 2.7% as its inflation planning assumption for the Supporting People Programme at national level. It is accordingly proposed that the additional funding available for 2007/8 will provide an uplift for all Supporting People funded service providers of 2.7% compared to 2006/7 rates.
- 3.3 In East Ayrshire, apart from the uplift for inflation which will provide an additional £0.11M, an additional £0.7M will be made available to Social Work run services to further expand their existing services to vulnerable adults and older peoples services.
- 3.4 For Housing run services, apart from the uplift for inflation of £0.046M an additional £0.3M will be made available. That funding will allow new services to be commissioned to deal with the increasing numbers of young people presenting themselves as homeless and further improve our capacity to meet the challenges of the Scottish Executive's 2012 homelessness agenda.

#### **4. REVISED SERVICE CHARGES FOR EX HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FUNDED SERVICES**

- 4.1 A previous report to this Committee in May 2006 presented the conclusions of the Best Value Review of the Sheltered Housing Warden Service. Since receiving Committee approval for the planned changes, work has progressed on restructuring the service, which will take effect from April 2007.
- 4.2 One result of the new services that are to replace the current warden service is that their cost to individual tenants will go down. In place of the current resident warden service, which is costed at £140.37 per month for each tenancy covered by the service, three complementary services have been costed. One of the costed services is the Community Alarm service. This is being separately reported on to the Social Work Committee for approval as it provides a service to all East Ayrshire residents rather than council tenants alone. The other two services are detailed below.
- 4.3 Up to now, all East Ayrshire Council sheltered tenants have had the Community Alarm service provided to them as the off duty cover element of their warden service, even though that was never an explicitly costed element of the service. Adding a third night shift mobile response vehicle from April 2007 will increase the actual cost of the Community Alarm service by 60p per week per service user to £4 per week. It should however be noted that of the nearly 3,000 Community Alarm service users in East Ayrshire, only 353 actually pay the full current charge of £3.40 per week. For the great majority of them, it is because they refuse to discuss their financial situation with anyone from the Council.
- 4.4 Replacing the current resident warden service in the schemes being re-designated as high support needs or medium support needs housing with a Care Co-ordinator and incorporating the actual Community Alarm service cost reduces the basic flat rate service charge for those schemes to £76.35 per month. This is a reduction from the current £140.37 monthly charge of £64.02 for 6 of our current tenants, a further 3 will see lesser reductions as they already get a rebate on their current charge.
- 4.5 Replacing the current resident warden service in those schemes being re-designated as low support needs housing with a daily visit from Homecare staff and incorporating the actual Community Alarm service cost reduces the basic flat rate service charge for those schemes to £63.31 per month. This is a reduction from the current £140.37 monthly charge of £77.06 for 6 of our current tenants, a further 8 will again see a lesser reduction as they already get a rebate on their current charge.
- 4.6 It is anticipated that 6 of our current tenants would see no reduction as they currently pay less than the new charges under the current charging policy, through the application of rebates based on their income and circumstances.

## **5. REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADMINISTERING SERVICE CHARGES**

- 5.1 The new service models providing supported housing for older people amalgamate previously separate services and funding streams in a complex hybrid service model. It will be essential to ensure consistent application of the Council's charging policy for non residential services and the Scottish Executive guidance relating to protected tenants and their preserved rights in ex Housing Revenue Account funded services.
- 5.2 It is therefore proposed, following a whole system approach, that the charging function for both the ex HRA services and Homecare services being delivered to tenants in our high, medium and low needs schemes be consolidated within the Supporting People Team in Neighbourhood Services. The team charges for the current warden service and deals with all issues relating to protected tenants.
- 5.3 The East Ayrshire Joint Team is now operational and has already achieved significant results in income maximisation for the pensioners referred so far. The Joint Team is embedded within the Supporting People Team with full on line access to DWP systems. It is ideally placed to ensure that all of our tenants in high needs, medium needs or low needs housing have their incomes maximised from all forms of benefit entitlements.
- 5.4 Care Co-ordinators and home care managers will do their needs assessments and put services in place to meet the identified needs. Where appropriate, tenants will then be referred on for income maximisation through the Joint Team process and any resulting financial assessment and billing tasks will be passed to Supporting People Team clerical staff. This will minimise the administrative work load for front line staff and will ensure the fullest access to benefits for tenants. The Supporting People Team will also continue to operate the charging policy for Housing Association provided services.

## **6. RE-DESIGNATION OF EAST AYRSHIRE SHELTERED HOUSING**

- 6.1 As previously reported to the Committee in May 2006 in the context of its consideration of the conclusions of the Best Value Review of the Sheltered Housing Warden Service, 10 of our sheltered schemes are being re-designated as extra care housing to meet high or medium levels of need. The other 11 schemes are being re-designated as low needs/amenity housing.
- 6.2 As part of the Best Value Review of Sheltered Housing, a group of 13 properties in Hopes Avenue Dalmellington that currently receive a warden service from the adjacent Bield Housing Association scheme and are thus designated as sheltered housing were further identified as being appropriate to designate as low needs/amenity housing. This would entail replacing their current warden service with a daily Homecare visit and transferring their Community Alarm cover from their current Bield Response 24 service to the Council's Community Alarm service. The tenants would lose their access to the communal facilities at the Bield scheme, but the questionnaires that they

completed as part of the service review showed that this access was largely theoretical, the scheme facilities were almost never used by them.

## **7. THE FUTURE OF THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME**

- 7.1 The Comprehensive Spending Review due later this year is being advertised as the most challenging yet. The Council's officers have been working closely with the Scottish Executive on the research needed to gather the evidence that will sustain the Supporting People Programme nationally through the challenges of the forthcoming Spending Review. All indications are that the Supporting People Programme can demonstrate that it delivers cost effective services that can make fundamental differences to people's lives.
- 7.2 The outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review will be the subject of a future report to Committee.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GENERAL FUND**

- 8.1 The additional funding for Social Work services will help reduce the amount currently spent on meeting the assessed need for housing support services that exceeds the amount of funding that can be provided from Supporting People funds. Current indications are that the additional expenditure on housing support services funded from the community care budget will be approximately £1.4M for 2006/7. As previously reported to committee, the need for services has steadily increased since 2003 and continues to increase, despite the amount of funding made available by the Scottish Executive for housing support services remaining essentially unchanged until recently.
- 8.2 The income maximisation work of the Joint Team with tenants will mean an increase in charging income for Supporting People funded Homecare services. This will in turn release additional Supporting People funding to be provided to other services.
- 8.3 Replacing the current Bield warden service for the 13 tenants in Hopes Avenue, Dalmellington would allow an additional £8,360 to be provided to Homecare and alarm services.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

- 9.1 The reduction in service charges outlined in Paragraph 4 above will mean that the ongoing financial contribution required of the Housing Revenue Account will go down in line with the reduction in the cost of the service. Current estimates are that the required contribution will decrease from £0.157M in 2006/7 to an initial £0.98M for 2007/8
- 9.2 This reduction of £0.059M in the required contribution from the Housing Revenue Account releases an equivalent amount of funding towards achieving the Council's commitments under the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

## 10. NUMBERS OF SERVICE USERS BENEFITING FROM THE PROGRAMME

- 10.1 At a previous meeting of the Social Work Committee, members requested information on the actual numbers of East Ayrshire residents who are assisted to live independently as a result of Supporting People funding. That information is also being reported to this Committee in order to illustrate the relevance of the Supporting People Programme for East Ayrshire residents. During 2005/6, the Council spent a total of £6.54M from Supporting People funds and a further £0.5 M from the community care budget on housing support services. The following table shows the numbers of people living in East Ayrshire that were supported to live independently in their own homes during that year.

Physical disability/illness	2612	Mainly older people
People having mental health problems	526	
People with a learning disability	323	
People who use alcohol	213	
People who use drugs	249	
Older people	967	
Vulnerable due to young age	400	
People at risk of offending / re-offending, people leaving prison	32	
Women at risk of domestic violence	249	
People who are homeless or sleeping rough	1168	
People with sensory impairment	46	
People with dementia	49	
Other vulnerable groups	19	
<b>Net total</b>	<b>6340</b>	Some people used more than one service in the year

During 2006/7 the Council will spend approximately £6.7M from Supporting People funds on housing support services. A further £1.4M will be spent on housing support services from the community care budget. All indications are that the numbers of people receiving assistance from Supporting People funded services continue to increase compared to the numbers given above.

## 11. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The changes outlined in this report give practical effect to the policy changes inherent in the Council's adoption of its new Supported Accommodation Strategy in 2006.
- 11.2 It is proposed following a whole system approach, that the charging function for both the ex HRA services and Homecare services being delivered to tenants in our high, medium and low needs/amenity schemes be consolidated within the Supporting People Team in Neighbourhood Services.

## 12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In terms of section 61(4) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended a house may be excluded from the right to buy provisions if it is one of a group

of houses which has been designed for persons with special needs and either (i) the houses are provided with or situated near, special facilities for use by their tenants or (ii) the tenants are provided with housing support services.

12.2 Scottish Executive Guidance for Supporting People states that the provision of a Community Alarm service within a house does not by itself make a house specifically designed or adapted for a person with special needs. Rather the house must be occupied by an elderly, sick or disabled person and the house is either specifically designed or adapted for such persons or otherwise particularly suitable for them, having regard to its size, heating system and other major features or facilities.

12.3 It is considered that those sheltered properties re-designated as high or medium needs supported accommodation where common facilities will continue to be provided to tenants will continue to be excluded in terms of the right to buy provisions. It is however considered that the exclusion from right to buy provisions may only apply to those properties re-designated as low needs supported accommodation where common facilities will no longer be provided as long as the tenants occupying such properties continue to have special needs which require the provision of housing support services.

### **13. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 The provision of more focused services for older people contributes to the 'improving opportunities', 'eliminating poverty' and 'improving community safety' agendas of the community plan.

### **14. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 The provision of more focused services for older people will reduce risk and facilitate its better management.

### **15. RECOMMENDATIONS**

15.1 The Committee are recommended to:-

- (i) approve the 2.7% uplift for Supporting People funded services and the additional funding for services;
- (ii) approve the new basic flat rate service charges for ex Housing Revenue Account funded services;
- (iii) approve the revised arrangements for the administration of Service Charges;
- (iv) note the re-designation of former sheltered properties as low needs supported accommodation /amenity housing; and
- (v) otherwise note the contents of the report.

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CMCA/GC/LA

21 February 2007

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Report to Housing Committee of 17 May 2006 'A Supported Accommodation Strategy for Older People in East Ayrshire'.
2. Scottish Executive letter of 17 January 2007 re carry forward of funds to 2007/08.

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