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Our ref: HS/RW/SM

Your ref:

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Dear Jo

### **Older Peoples' Strategic Review - Draft Recommendations Report Response to Consultation**

I am writing in response to your consultation exercise on the Older Peoples' Strategic Review Draft Recommendations Report (Executive Summary), and having discussed the draft report with colleagues and tenants' representatives, set out below is an officer response from the Council.

It is important to note that at its meeting on 30 July 2009, the Council's Housing Scrutiny Member Panel will be considering the Draft Recommendations Report and this officer response. After this meeting, I will be incorporating the views of Members and forwarding you the Council's final response to the consultation.

#### **1. Provision of the Scheme Manager Service at Epping Forest District Council**

1.1 I thought it would be helpful to set out the way in which the Scheme Manager service is currently provided at this Council. The Council currently employs ten full time Scheme Managers at sheltered schemes for older people, and three Scheme Managers who visit tenants living in designated dwellings for older people on general needs housing estates. All tenants living in sheltered housing are visited on every duty day. When the sheltered housing Scheme Manager is absent for up to 2 days, the Careline Service monitors calls from tenants and calls each day those who are designated by the Scheme Manager as being "at risk". For longer periods of absence more intensive cover is provided by Mobile staff.

1.2 Over twenty years ago, the Council recognised that Scheme Managers in sheltered accommodation had some spare capacity, and therefore decided that they visit tenants living in designated properties outside in the local community and include them in social activities at their scheme. Each Scheme Manager visits on average 40 additional properties in the local community, operating a documented call category system. In accordance with this procedure, the Scheme Manager undertakes a risk assessment of tenants living in the community to assess if they are either "high", "medium" or "low" risk. "High" risk tenants are visited approximately twice weekly, "medium" risk tenants visited once each fortnight, with "low" risk tenants being visited once every four weeks.

1.3 All tenanted properties designated for older people in the community are linked to the Careline Service. All Scheme Managers complete a visit declaration form on a monthly basis detailing all visits made to residents during the period. In addition to properties in the community visited by sheltered housing Scheme Managers, three additional Scheme Managers on area estates are dedicated to visiting a further 330 properties under the documented call category system.

1.4 Scheme Managers also have responsibilities for testing alarm equipment, fire alarm systems, promoting social activities, liaising with contractors and reporting repairs.

## **2. Hub and Spoke or Community Outreach**

2.1 Officers agree that any Scheme Manager service should be as needs led as possible but have a number of concerns. As you are aware, older people enter sheltered accommodation for additional security, safety and piece of mind. The residents and their families expect them to be visited on every duty day. The review does not seem to address seriously enough, if at all, the fact that a person can go into sheltered accommodation at the age of 60 and have a heart attack, for example a month later. We believe it should not be taken lightly the implications to supporting people and indeed authorities, of being challenged should a “low” risk resident be left unaccounted for and dead at the property for many days. There is a very high risk that duties of care could be breached in such circumstances, and supporting people may become involved in defending a well publicised negligence claim. Officers are concerned about the service being withdrawn from any service user in sheltered accommodation, and believe that all residents in sheltered accommodation should be accounted for by the Scheme Manager on every duty day regardless of their need.

2.2 Officers also have concerns that the proposed referral and assessment process (via the Floating Support Gateway) for all service users will be very time consuming and costly. The time spent on referral paperwork and processes may result in a lesser service being provided to residents. We also have concerns about residents each receiving three hours of support per week, as this appears to be too lengthy when bearing in mind that we are providing housing related support, a service which up to now has been described as “good neighbourly”. Further clarification of the term housing related support would be helpful as there is a danger that the service user could be confused with this and the role of other agencies. If this Council provided a much higher level of support (3 hours per week per resident) to people living in the community, when also taking into account the proposed lengthy referral and assessment process, I believe we would have to withdraw a service from hundreds of our tenants in order to provide a much more intense service to fewer people. This would not be in the spirit of the aims of the Review set out under 2.1.1 which has the objective of supporting the growing number of older people.

2.3 When the hub and spoke model is introduced, is it the intention to phase it in or introduce the service on an agreed date, with all existing service users being put through the assessment process?

2.4 The Council, at this stage, has no comments to make on status quo or traditional sheltered housing or the floating support model on the basis that the supporting people team are stating that the preferred service delivery model is hub and spoke. At meetings attended by officers, we have been advised that authorities will be expected to use the hub and spoke model unless there is a very good reason for them to opt out.

## **3. Key Principles**

3.1 Turning to the ten key principles set out in paragraph 3.1, we would comment as follows:

#### ***Key Principle 4***

3.2 This principle states that services must be flexible so that people can get more or less support when needed. This could be an opportunity to operate a two tier service in sheltered accommodation, with those in less need receiving a short visit or call from the Scheme Manager, with those in higher need receiving a more intensive service. This would free up some time as many residents would only get the short visit. We would strongly recommend that all residents in sheltered accommodation are either visited or called over the emergency alarm system on each duty day.

#### ***Key Principle 5***

3.3 This principle refers to effective housing related support. I think it would be helpful if under the proposed hub and spoke model, the supporting people team set out in clear terms what housing related support consists of and what would be expected from the Scheme Manager in the future.

#### ***Key Principle 6***

3.4 This principle explains that services should be available on a tenure neutral basis. We wish to reserve judgement on offering the service on a tenure neutral basis and would welcome a discussion with the supporting people team on how this would work and how it would be publicised. Furthermore, we are not sure how a provider can opt out of the hub and spoke model, and meet this principle.

#### ***Key Principle 10***

3.5 This principle states that services should be delivered through a partnership approach integrated with health, social services and at the third sector. Officers believe that the role of the Scheme Manager should be clearly defined, as the service user will not identify the difference between the Scheme Manager role, and that of other agencies.

### **4. Consultation**

4.1 The Council has consulted with its Scheme Managers and its Sheltered Forum. The Sheltered Forum consists of two tenant representatives from each of our sheltered housing schemes who meet on a two-monthly basis. Their views are as follows.

#### ***Scheme Managers***

4.2 The Scheme Managers generally agreed with the contents of the report and the ten principles set out at 3.1. They also believed, in general terms, that the hub and spoke model was the best option, and that support should be more flexible. They also agreed that residents should be given the option to opt in or out of support, provided the resident has capacity to make that decision. They commented that three hours of support each week would be too much, and between 1 and 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours per week should be accurate as three hours of support each week would greatly reduce the number of residents currently receiving support in the Epping Forest District. They were concerned about the impact the changes would have on jobs, and what changes there will be to the way support is delivered. They also felt that the supporting people team should be much more specific about the type of support they would be expected to deliver.

## ***Sheltered Forum***

4.3 The Sheltered Forum mostly agreed with the contents of the report. However, they had concerns about changes to services and the possible loss of sheltered accommodation. They were in favour of the ten principles and believed that Epping Forest District Council already operated the hub and spoke model and felt the current way of delivering the service worked well. They had concerns about extending the support to private rented or owner occupiers as the Scheme Manager would be spending too much time away from the scheme. They believed a flexible approach to providing support was agreeable and felt that people should be able to opt out, as long as they had capacity to make the decision and they could opt back into the service. They further believed that the three hours of support each week should be reconsidered. Under any other comments, the Sheltered Forum stated that they were very happy with the service they receive at present and do not want it to change.

## **5. Conclusion**

5.1 The view of officers is that the Council is currently providing the Scheme Manager service in an effective and efficient manner, and working in the spirit of the hub and spoke principles. We are opposed to the setting up of lengthy assessment and referral processes (through the Floating Support Gateway) and delivering a service for up to three hours each week to each resident in the community (being more time than sheltered housing residents currently enjoy), which would substantially reduce the numbers of residents benefitting from the service. The initial view of officers is that this Council would strongly recommend that our service is provided as it is currently, but subject to the comments listed above, we would endeavour to meet with the ten key principles.

As stated, in early August 2009, I will send you the Council's final response following the Draft Recommendations Report being considered by the meeting of the Council's Housing Scrutiny Member Panel, which I hope you will be able to attend. It would be helpful for our Members to be aware of any contractual implications, should the Council decide that neither of the Models set out in the Review are appropriate for this Council.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

**R Wilson**

**Assistant Director of Housing (Operations)**