

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-008-2009/10.

Date of meeting: 13 July 2009.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Housing.

Subject: Review of Older Peoples' Services.

Responsible Officer: Roger Wilson (01992 564419).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations:

(1) That an additional post of 1 FTE Senior Scheme Manager in the Housing Directorate funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), be agreed from 1 September 2009, at Grade 5 subject to Job Evaluation; and

(2) That, (should the Council be invited to submit a tender), a further report be submitted to the Cabinet at a later date, to consider additional staffing implications for monitoring alarms for an external provider, prior to the Council entering into any contract.

Executive Summary:

The Older Peoples' Section within the Housing Directorate includes the provision of the Scheme Manager Service and Careline. Over the last year, the Section has expanded resulting in a substantial increase in workload which is expected to increase further in the future. It is considered that the current structure of the Section, which is attached as an appendix to the report is not now appropriate. This is due to the Housing Manager (Older People's Services) needing to become involved in day-to-day work and not having sufficient time to deal with the strategic direction of the services.

The reasons for the increase in workload are due to a number of factors including, the Supporting People's Older People's Strategic Review, which will bring changes to the way in which the Scheme Manager service is provided, the expansion of Careline, the possibility of linking an external alarm provider into the Careline Service and the development of Telecare which provides additional monitoring equipment for alarm users.

As a result of the additional workload, it is recommended that one full time equivalent Senior Scheme Manager post is added to the establishment in order to enable the re-structuring of the Housing Older Peoples' Section as set out in an appendix to the report, and to ensure residents in the District are able to fully benefit from this important service. Furthermore, it is also recommended that (should the Council be invited to tender), a further report is submitted to the Cabinet to consider additional staffing implications for monitoring alarms for an external provider, prior to entering into any contract.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The role of Housing Older Peoples' Services continues to expand due to the increase in technology, the expansion of Careline and the requirements of Essex County Council's Supporting Team. As a result, the workload is increasing and it is therefore important to appoint a full-time Senior Scheme Manager to enable the re-structuring of the Housing Older Peoples' Section. This will allow the Housing Manager (Older Peoples' Services) to be freed

up from day-to-day duties and being in a better position to manage and oversee the changes that are needed to meet the future challenges of the Section. It would also enable the Assistant Manager (Older Peoples' Services) to be more focussed on taking forward, in particular, the Telecare agenda.

Other Options for Action:

To not appoint an additional Senior Scheme Manager Post to the Housing Directorate's Older Peoples' Services Section.

To not tender to monitor alarms for any external provider.

Report:

1. The Older Peoples' Section within the Housing Directorate includes the provision of the Scheme Manager Service and Careline. Over the last year, due to changes to the Supporting People regime, the increase in technology and the planned enhancements under the Careline Review, the Section has expanded resulting in a substantial increase in workload which is expected to increase further in the future. It is considered that the current structure of the Section, which is attached as an appendix to the report is not now appropriate. This is due to the Housing Manager (Older Peoples' Services) needing to become involved in day-to-day work and not having sufficient time to deal with the strategic direction of the services.

2. The reasons for the increase in workload is detailed below.

Provision of the Scheme Manager Service

3. 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.

4. 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.

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

Supporting People's Older Peoples' Strategic Review

6. Supporting People is a major Government initiative, which introduced a new policy and funding framework for housing related support which includes services delivered by

Scheme Managers. As a result, all housing related support provided by the Scheme Managers is funded by Essex County Council through the Supporting People Team, with the Council being under contract to provide the service. Since the introduction of Supporting People, Scheme Managers now have to complete Tenant Support Plans for all service users and officers are having to prepare for lengthy scheme review inspections of housing related support services, meeting at least the minimum standards to ensure the funding continues.

7. At its meeting on 30 July 2009, the Housing Scrutiny Panel will be considering the Council's response to the Older Peoples' Strategic Review currently being undertaken by Essex County Council's Supporting People Team which covers Extra Care, very sheltered housing, sheltered housing and services specifically for older people with mental health problems. Under the Strategic Review, the following changes to the way in which the Scheme Manager service is provided are being recommended:

- The Scheme Manager service will be provided to sheltered housing residents by the preferred "Hub and Spoke" Model with the sheltered scheme being the hub, with the support reaching out to older people in the community like the spokes of a wheel. Support will be provided to users based on a needs assessment, with some sheltered housing residents potentially not receiving a service. The remainder of the Scheme Manager's time will be spent providing the service to older people in the community. The amount of time spent at the scheme and in the community will depend on the levels of support needed as determined through the services users' needs and risk assessments.
- The service provided in the community will be delivered on a tenure neutral basis.
- All service users will be assessed through the existing floating support gateway, with many moving in and out of service provision as their needs change.
- Service users in existing schemes can chose to opt out of receiving support and opt back in if their needs change.

8. As a result of the above, in addition to the extra workload on completing Tenant Support Plans and preparing for Scheme Reviews, all residents will need to be referred through the floating support gateway. Furthermore, services will be publicised and offered to those living in other tenures including the private rented sector, owner occupiers and housing association tenants. On going assessments of service users will also need to be undertaken as their needs change and they move in and out of service provision.

Expansion of Epping Forest Careline

9. At its meeting on 1 September 2008, the Cabinet agreed that the Careline Service continued to be provided locally by the Council, but that detailed consideration be given in the future to the following enhancements:

- Exploring the potential to monitor alarms for other authorities and housing associations;
- Extending the routine repairs reporting service for tenants from 5pm to 8pm on each working day;
- Periodically monitoring existing Council-owned CCTV systems through website access following the appointment of the new CCTV Co-ordinator and formulation of a Corporate CCTV Policy;
- Monitoring the whereabouts of the Council's lone workers on a 24-hour basis; and
- Extending the Careline premises into the ground floor of the vacant adjacent former

Scheme Manager's accommodation and converting the first floor into a one-bedroom flat which will be incorporated into the Council's sheltered housing scheme at Parsonage Court, Loughton.

10. In the first instance, the extension to the premises must be achieved. Progress has been made with Planning Consent being granted and the specification being drawn up. However, all of the enhancements will need to be supervised and will place additional work upon the Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services).

11. The Housing Portfolio Holder has previously agreed that tenders be submitted to provide alarm monitoring services to other providers. Officers have been in discussion with an alarm provider who is interested in linking into the Council's Careline Service. In order for the Council to be given consideration, it would need to enter into a tendering exercise. In addition, although it would result in additional income to the Council, (should the Council be invited to tender) a further report will need to be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration, prior to entering into any contract, as the number of Careline Operators who monitor calls would need to increase.

Telecare in the Community

12. The range of equipment available to Careline service users is increasing due to developments in technology. Although those linked to the service are able to summon help in an emergency via a pendant radio-trigger or by using a pull cord, services users can now benefit from a range of sensors including smoke detectors, bogus caller buttons, fall detectors and inactivity detectors etc.

13. The Council works in partnership with Adult Social Care, Health, Police and Fire services to promote the service. A number of Careline staff are trained assessors who survey each property ensuring users receive the correct equipment. Following assessment staff install the sensors giving advice to the service user. In addition to the 2,420 users already linked into the service, since its introduction, Careline have installed 390 Telecare packages. In 2008/2009, Telecare and alarm installations in the private sector resulted in income of around £163,000 to the Housing Revenue Account, increasing from £130,000 in 2005/2006.

14. The increase in the number of Telecare installations has increased the workload of the Housing Older Peoples' Services Section.

Telecare Services Accreditation

15. In order for Careline to be able to continue to provide Telecare packages and monitor alarm connections for other providers, it will need to obtain Telecare Services Association (TSA) status. TSA is a representative body for the Telecare industry in the UK. The standard ensures that call handling and installations are being carried out in a reliable, consistent and continuous manner. It also enables any external providers considering linking into the service to gain assurances that the service is well managed and meets with Supporting People's Quality Assessment Framework.

Conclusion

16. As can be seen, due to the Older Peoples' Strategic Review, the expansion of Careline and Telecare and the need to obtain TSA accreditation, the workload of the Housing Older Peoples' Services Section has substantially increased and will grow further in the future. It is therefore recommended that one full time equivalent Senior Scheme Manager Post is added to the establishment to ensure residents can fully benefit from this important service. A brief summary of the new Senior Scheme Manager's duties are as follows:

- Performance Development Reviews;
- Induction Training for new staff;
- Monitoring of Scheme Manager's work and being their first point of contact;

- Assisting with cover in any staff absences;
- Deputising for the Assistant Housing Manager (Older People's Services);
- Overseeing the day-to-day implementation of the Older People's Strategic Review; and
- General management of sheltered housing.

17. If the Cabinet agree the additional post, this will enable the re-structuring of the Housing Older Peoples' Section as set out as an appendix to the report. This will result in the Housing Manager (Older Peoples' Services) being freed up from day-to-day duties and being in a better position to manage and oversee the changes that are needed to meet the future challenges of the Section. It would also enable the Assistant Manager (Older People's Services) to be more focussed on taking forward, in particular, the Telecare agenda.

Resource Implications:

One additional full time Senior Scheme Manager Post at Grade 5 mid point (subject to Job Evaluation) at a cost of £25,250 per annum.

Potential income stream should the Council be successful in securing a contract to monitor alarms for an external provider.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Housing Act 1985

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

No implications

Consultation Undertaken:

Essex County Council's Supporting People Team have been consulted on the report and they concur with the recommendations. The Tenants' and Leaseholders' Federation will be informed of the matter at their meeting on 14 July 2009.

Background Papers:

None

Impact Assessments:

There are no risk management issues, and no impact of the report's recommendations upon the Council's statutory duty to promote equality throughout the District.