

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference:** C-054-2009/10  
**Date of meeting:** 16 November 2009



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio:** Housing  
**Subject:** Re-design of the Epping Forest Careline Premises Extension  
**Responsible Officer:** Roger Wilson (01992 564419).  
**Democratic Services Officer:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- (1) That the first floor of the accommodation adjacent to the Careline centre not be converted into a one-bedroom flat and incorporated into the Council's sheltered housing scheme at Parsonage Court, Loughton, as previously agreed but that this area be used instead for additional office space for the Older People's Services Section; and**
- (2) That due to the necessary re-design, for the reasons set out in the report, a revised planning application be submitted for the extension of the Careline premises.**

### **Executive Summary:**

The Cabinet have previously agreed that the Council's 24-hour emergency alarm Careline service should be enhanced and continued to be provided locally. It was further agreed that the Careline premises be extended into the ground floor of the vacant adjacent former Scheme Manager's accommodation and that the first floor of this accommodation be converted into a one-bedroom flat and incorporated into the Council's sheltered housing scheme at Parsonage Court, Loughton. Since the Cabinet meeting, there have been a number of developments which have led officers to believe that additional space will be required for the Older People's Services Section and therefore the first floor area should be used for this purpose rather than be converted into a new flat.

The reasons for the additional space being needed are to accommodate the new Senior Scheme Manager Post and a Scheme Manager who is expected to move off site and will need office accommodation. Following further expansion of the Telecare service, more room is needed to store equipment. The layout of the centre now has to be re-designed due to concerns raised under Building Regulations which has resulted in the call answering equipment being re-located underneath the proposed new flat, which could result in causing a noise nuisance to any resident living above. In addition, the escape route from the new flat will have to be enclosed as a precaution against fire, which will add costs to the works. Although there will be a loss of rental income from the new flat, the cost of the works will be reduced and due to the housing subsidy rules, as the Council would have one less unit of accommodation in its housing stock there will be a reduction in the amount of subsidy paid to Government.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

It is considered that due to the expansion of the Older People's Section, additional accommodation is needed to provide further storage space, office accommodation for the new Senior Scheme Manager post, and an office for a local Scheme Manager who is expected to move off site. It would therefore be sensible not to convert the first floor above the vacant adjacent former Scheme Manager's accommodation into a one bedroom flat (as previously agreed), but to use this space for the needs of the service. In addition, due to the re-design, following concerns raised under Building Regulations, the call answering equipment now has to be located in a new position which is underneath the proposed flat which could cause noise nuisance to any resident living above. It should be noted that if the flat is not provided, this would bring some savings on the overall costs of the project. Although there would be some loss of potential rental income from the new flat, this would be reduced due to the housing subsidy rules as the Council would pay less subsidy as it would have one less unit of accommodation in its housing stock.

### **Other Options for Action:**

- (i) To convert the first floor of the vacant former Scheme Manager's accommodation to a one bedroom flat and not use this area for additional office space for the Older People's Section.
- (ii) Not to submit a revised planning application for the extension of the Careline premises.

### **Report:**

1. At its meeting on 1 September 2008, (Minute 51 refers) the Cabinet agreed that the Council's 24-hour emergency alarm Careline service should be enhanced and continued to be provided locally. The enhancements include the monitoring of CCTV systems through the Careline centre, the extension of repairs reporting hours from 5pm to 8pm, the monitoring of the Council's lone workers and linking in alarm connections from other providers. It was further agreed that the Careline premises be extended into the ground floor of the vacant adjacent former Scheme Manager's accommodation and that the first floor of this accommodation be converted into a one-bedroom flat and incorporated into the Council's sheltered housing scheme at Parsonage Court, Loughton.
2. Since the Cabinet meeting, there have been a number of developments which have led officers to believe that additional space will be required generally for the Older People's Services Section due to the following reasons:

#### Appointment of the new Senior Scheme Manager Post

3. At its meeting on 13 July 2009 (Minute 26 refers), due to the increased workload of the Older People's Section, the Cabinet agreed the appointment of a new Senior Scheme Manager Post. The ideal location for an office for this new member of staff is at the Careline Centre where both the Housing Manager and Assistant Housing Manager for the Section are currently located. Therefore, additional office space needs to be provided.

#### Scheme Managers Moving off-site

4. The Cabinet will be aware of the Council's policy to no longer accommodate Scheme Managers in tied accommodation on-site and to allow existing Scheme Managers to move off-site if they wish to do so. It is anticipated that a Scheme Manager in the Loughton area will shortly be taking up the option of moving off-site and therefore will need to be provided with

office accommodation. Again, the best location for this would be at the Careline centre, where additional office space will need to be found.

### Telecare in the Community

5. The range of additional equipment available to Careline service users is increasing due to developments in technology including, smoke detectors, bogus caller buttons, fall detectors and inactivity detectors etc. As this equipment needs to be stored at Careline for easy access, additional space will need to be found.

### Re-design of the layout of the Careline Centre

6. The Council's Architect who is project managing the extension to the premises has submitted a planning application and sought Building Regulations approval. Due to concerns raised under Building Regulations around compliance in terms of adaptations for wheelchair users in what is deemed to be a public building, it has been necessary to undertake a re-design of the layout. This has resulted in reduced space being available in the area originally planned to accommodate the call answering equipment, which will now have to be re-located underneath the proposed new flat, which could result in causing a noise nuisance to any resident living above. In addition, under Building Regulations, the escape route across the landing area above the reception at Parsonage Court will have to be enclosed and made into a corridor area as a precaution against fire, which will add costs to the works. These are considered to be further reasons for not proceeding with the conversion of the upper floor of the vacant adjacent former Scheme Manager's accommodation to a one bedroom flat.

7. Due to the re-design, and the need to install an air conditioning unit on the flat roof above the premises, permission is also being sought to submit a revised planning application.

8. Due to the reasons set out above, firstly, it would be inappropriate to have a residential flat above the area where the call answering equipment is located, and secondly, there is a clear need for additional space. It is therefore recommended that the first floor of the adjacent former Scheme Manager's accommodation not be converted into a one-bedroom flat and incorporated into the Council's sheltered housing scheme at Parsonage Court, Loughton, but that this space be used for additional office space for the Older People's Services Section.

9. The Cabinet were advised that the cost of the Careline extension and flat conversion would be around £110,000. Due to the planned provision of air conditioning and other minor items, a budget of £139,000 has been made available, funded from the Miscellaneous Structures budget within the existing Housing Capital Programme. If the additional flat is not provided it would result in a saving on the cost of the project at around £10,000 - £15,000. Although there would be a loss of potential rental income from the proposed new flat of £3,200 per annum, if the recommendations are agreed, this would be reduced by around £1,500 per annum due to the housing subsidy rules, as the Council would have one less unit of accommodation in its housing stock. Therefore, the net loss of potential income would be only around £1,700 per annum which represents around 6 – 9 years of the potential rental income.

### **Resource Implications:**

Reduction in cost of the Careline project of around £10,000 - £15,000.

Loss of potential income of £3,200 per annum from the originally proposed additional flat.

Reduction in the amount of overall subsidy paid to the Government of around £1,500 per annum due to a reduction of one unit within the housing stock (which results in a potential

loss of £1,700 in potential income).

Total budget available for the Careline project of £139,000 funded from the Miscellaneous Structures within the existing Housing Capital Programme.

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

Housing Act 1985.

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

None

**Consultation Undertaken:**

None

**Background Papers:**

Cabinet reports 1 September 2008 & 13 July 2009

**Impact Assessments:**

Risk Management

A Risk Assessment for the Careline project has been undertaken to ensure all associated risks are minimised. Under equalities issues, following advice given under building regulations, the plans for the project have been revised to give better access to wheelchair users.

Equality and Diversity:

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties; reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?

An Equality Impact Assessment on the Careline extension was not undertaken as it did not involve any policy changes and therefore does not have an impact on the way in which the service is provided.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?

Not applicable.