

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – 22 SEPTEMBER 2015

Title of report	REVIEW OF THE OLDER PERSONS SUPPORT SERVICE
Key Decision	a) Financial Yes b) Community Yes
Contacts	Councillor Roger Bayliss 01530 411055 roger.bayliss@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Director of Housing 01530 454819 glyn.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Head of Housing 01530 454780 chris.lambert@nwleicestershire.gov.uk
Purpose of report	To inform members of the review of the older persons support service and seek approval to implement a new service charge.
Reason for Decision	Leicestershire County Council has given notice that it will be terminating its older persons housing related support contract on 30 September 2015, which will end the £306k per year grant funding for the older person support service.
Council Priorities	Homes and Communities Value for Money
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	The proposed changes with the introduction of a new service charge, can be met from within the existing approved Housing Revenue Account budget.
Link to relevant CAT	None
Risk Management	This report outlines the approach in managing and mitigating against risks.
Human Rights	No implications apparent.

Transformational Government	Approval of this report will support the delivery of more efficient service focusing on providing a visiting support service to our most vulnerable residents in the greatest need.
Comments of Head of Paid Service	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Deputy Monitoring Officer	Report is satisfactory
Consultees	Service Users; Tenant & Leaseholder Consultation Forum; Older Persons Working Group, Corporate Leadership Team.
Background papers	None
Recommendations	THAT CABINET APPROVES THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW SERVICE CHARGE OF £3.06 PER WEEK FOR ALL TENANTS CONNECTED TO THE CONTROL CENTRE, AND NOTES THE OUTCOME OF THE REVIEW OF THE OLDER PERSONS SUPPORT SERVICE AS DETAILED IN THIS REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Following the decision of Leicestershire County Council (LCC) to decommission the current Older Persons Housing Related Support contract on 30 September 2015 and end the annual grant of £306k we receive for providing this service, a review of the Older Persons Support Service has been undertaken.
- 1.2 This report informs members of the revised approach to the delivery of the Older Persons Support Service and seeks support to introduce a new service charge of £3.06 per week, with effect from November 2015, to cover the staffing costs of the control centre service.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 For many years, Councils and other housing organisations provided a good neighbour service to their older tenants, commonly known as the Warden services. This service fell into two categories, Resident Wardens usually living on site and provided support to older people living in a block with communal facilities, and Mobile Wardens who visited older people in their own homes.
- 2.2 This service is supported by an alarm system that allows two way communications with tenants via a call centre. These systems are either “Hard

wired”, with emergency pull cords and a 2-way intercom system built into the property, or stand alone units commonly known as “Lifelines” that connect through an individual telephone line to each property.

- 2.3 In 2004/05 the funding for these services changed with the introduction of the Supporting People regime. In two tier authorities, County Councils were the “administering authorities” who received government grant on behalf of all the parties to the Supporting People partnership. Grant was then distributed to service providers through contractual arrangements. This grant has been reduced significantly since the regime was introduced, and in 2015/16, North West Leicestershire was due to receive an annual grant of approximately £306k.
- 2.4 North West Leicestershire District Council, as service provider, received the gross contract value, and LCC collected charges from customers directly. Some customers have to pay for the service and others received financial support from payments through the County Councils Fairer Charging subsidy process. The gross weekly charge made by the County Council is £6.58.
- 2.5 In 2012, following lengthy consultation with service users and providers, LCC undertook a market testing exercise which was abandoned in early 2014, due to insufficient bids being received to cover the whole County adequately..
- 2.6 This was then followed by further budget challenges faced by LCC and a further strategic level review of all support services was completed during 2014. The conclusion of this was a significant reduction in the funding available for Older Persons Housing Related support, with all existing contracts to provide this service to be terminated by September 2015.

3.0 THE REVIEW

- 3.1 A working group, including staff representatives was formed in response to the forthcoming withdrawal of funding, which considered a number of options:

Option 1 – Self funding model of support using the existing Housing Revenue Account subsidy. To align the Older Persons Support Service with the Housing Management team so that tenants continue to be supported and create opportunities to provide support to older and vulnerable people in general needs housing as well as supported and sheltered housing.

Option 2 – Do nothing, support services cease and tenants access services via the ‘Light bulb’ project. A county wide project currently being developed and led by Blaby District Council to provide signposting and lower level handy person services.

Option 3 – Explored shared service opportunities by working in partnership with another council to provide support services to tenants

- 3.2 The working group concluded that option 1 is the preferred option as retaining the service not only safeguards existing customers but also ensures that the council retains its Control Centre infrastructure and is able to continue providing corporate and out of hours services as well as retaining and building upon on our

private lifeline income. Corporate Leadership Team supported this view, and the service is currently being remodelled accordingly.

- 3.3 The staffing structure for the Support Service consists of a Team Manager and Team Leader, whose time and costs were shared 50% with Hinckley & Bosworth BC (HBBC). In addition we currently employ a part time Assistive Technology Officer who is responsible for marketing, installation, testing and replacement of damaged or faulty equipment, and is supported by the Support Officers during her non-working days. The team of seven Support Officers (5 full time and 2 part time) carry out on average 400 welfare/support visits each week to tenants living in over 1000 supported and sheltered housing locations across the district.
- 3.4 The remodelled staffing structure reduces the number of Support Officers from 6 FTE's (7 staff) to 4 FTE's, reducing staffing costs. The Older Persons Service Team Manager post has been deleted and the shared post agreement with Hinckley & Bosworth BC ended on the 26 June 2015. Responsibility for the management of the service transferred to the Housing Management Team Manager on 29 June 2015. The shared Team Leader arrangement will end on 2 October 2015 as the new full time Team Leader starts on 5 October 2015.
- 3.5 It is proposed the Support Officers will be located in two geographical areas and based at sheltered housing schemes, enabling them to respond to local need more easily. This will also focus activities around the sheltered schemes and reduce travel time and cost. Closer working with the voluntary sector will also be undertaken to maximise the opportunities for social activities and to provide assistance for transport etc.
- 3.6 The number of visits undertaken by the Support Officers will need to be reduced, and they will focus on those with the greatest support need. The frequency of visits is to be decided by reviewing the vulnerability of the tenant, their existing support network and the level of other agency involvement they already have.
- 3.7 Historically, tenants have been unable to 'opt out' of the service as access to the support service has been based on tenants being allocated and living in 'supported' or 'sheltered' properties. Many people have been allocated these properties because they are over 60 years of age but without any current support need. As part of the consultation process, some tenants have asked if they could 'opt out' of the service, particularly those who are still working and/or without health issues. It is anticipated that enabling tenants to 'opt out' of the support officer visiting service only will see a further reduction in the number of visits, enabling the officers to focus on those with the greatest support need.
- 3.8 The ending of the Housing Related Support Service Contract on 30 September 2015 will also end the recovery of the weekly charge from LCC. It is not proposed that North West Leicestershire District Council takes over the recovery of the full charge, as this would not be eligible for Housing Benefit. Instead there will be a new weekly service charge, collected with the weekly rent, which will cover the cost of the alarm service staffing costs only as this element will be eligible for Housing Benefit. Based on the current number of tenants linked to the control central, the weekly charge will be £3.06 per week which includes our standard 15% administration fee which is added to all service charges.

3.9 The new service charge will be applied to properties with the hard wired link to the control centre only and as this is integral to the building the tenants occupy, tenants will be unable to 'opt out' of this element of the service.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 It is recognised that many of the tenants using the service are vulnerable and it is important they, their family and/or carers are aware of the changes to the service. A letter has been sent to all service users advising of the changes to the service along with a question and answer sheet, a copy is attached as Appendix A.

4.2 In order to give tenants an opportunity to ask questions, six question and answer briefing sessions have been held along with two meetings of the Older Persons Working Group as detailed in the table below:

What	When	Where
Older Persons Working Group	10 August 2015	Council Offices
Question & Answer Briefing Sessions	17 August 2015, 1pm 17 August 2015, 6pm 18 August 2015, 1pm 24 August 2015, 6pm 26 August 2015, 6pm 2 September 2015, 12noon	Wakefield Court, Castle Donington Park View, Whitwick St Mary's Court, Hugglescote Central Court, Coalville Norman Court, Kegworth Hood Court, Ashby
Older Persons Working Group	15 September 2015	Council Offices

4.3 The sessions have been well attended with over 103 tenants or family members attending. The general feedback has been positive with tenants acknowledging changes need to be made as a result of the loss of funding. Also, as referred to in 3.7 above, some tenants have stated they wish to opt out of the visiting service.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Clearly the loss of £306,000 a year has resulted in us having to review the staffing resource within the Older Persons Team. The key changes are:

- Ending the shared service arrangement with Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council for the Team Manager role and the Housing Management Team Manager taking over responsibility for the team as part of the wider Housing Management Service. This change was implemented on 29 June 2015.
- Ending the shared service arrangement with Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council for the Team Leader role and for a full time Housing Support Team Leader to be appointed who will report direct to the Housing Management

Team Manager. The shared service arrangement will end on 2 October 2015 with the full time Housing Support Team Leader post holder commencing on 5 October 2015.

- There will be a reduction in the number of Support Officers from six full time equivalent employees (7 staff) to four full time equivalent employees. We are currently undergoing the selection process.
- The administrative support currently provided by the internal Business Support Team will come to an end on 30 September 2015. Changes to the working practices will significantly reduce the level of administration work.

5.2 The introducing of a service charge to cover the staffing costs of the alarm service has been calculated, taking into account the current number of service users, and the new weekly charge will be £3.06 per week.

5.3 By making the changes outlined above, the cost of providing the services will be an additional £32,000 which can be met from within the existing approved Housing Revenue Account budget. To reduce the additional cost, we will be exploring the opportunities to increase the income from private lifeline customers by at least 20% or £20,000.

COPY OF LETTER TO TENANTS ABOUT THE CHANGES TO THE OLDER PERSONS SUPPORT SERVICE



**Housing Directorate
HRA Business Support**

Please ask for: Mr Justin
O'Brien Telephone:
01530 454 605
Fax: 01530 454816
Our Ref: JO'B/ RIT

Date:

Dear

Changes to the Older Persons Support Service

As a result of our grant from Leicestershire County Council coming to an end in September 2015, we are currently reviewing the way we provide the Older Persons Support Service to our tenants who live in supported or sheltered housing. Our dedicated team of Support Officers currently undertake approximately 400 visits per week at over 1000 different locations across the district. The frequency of the Support Officer visits varies depending on individual circumstances and their support needs.

The funding to provide the service is changing as Leicestershire County Council has given us notice that from 30 September 2015, we will no longer be receiving the £306,000 per year grant which helps to fund the 24 hour Control Centre and the Older Persons Support Service.

We want to reassure you that despite this reduction in funding we will continue to provide an Older Persons Support service, although the service will have to change to reflect the reduction in budget we have available.

The main changes will be -

- **Making the service locally based**, working from sheltered schemes in your community
- **Continuing to provide a local emergency response service** through a 24 hour 7 day per week contact centre service
- **Continuing to visit people in their own homes** where there is a need for visiting support.

- **Holding regular social activities at local schemes** to provide social activities and support to those that want to attend.
- **Introducing a small weekly service charge** as part of your rent to cover the costs of alarm service which will be eligible for Housing benefit (the Support People charge currently paid to the County Council will stop at the end of September).

I am sure you will have some questions about the changes and I've put some more information on the attached questions and answer sheet.

We will also be holding six question and answer briefing sessions at venues across the district to give you and your family/carers an opportunity to ask any questions and to discuss how the service may be provided in the future. Details of the dates and venues are shown overleaf.

If you would like to attend one of these sessions please confirm your attendance by contacting the Resident Involvement team on 01530 454605. We may be able to provide assistance with transport.

If you have any queries and are unable to attend one of the briefing sessions, please contact Amanda Harper, Housing Management Team Manager by e-mail amanda.harper@nwleicestershire.gov.uk or telephone 01530 454808.

Yours sincerely

Mr Justin O'Brien
Resident Involvement Team Leader
HRA Business Support

The sessions will be held at the following dates and venues:

Monday August 17, 1pm – 2:30pm

Wakefield Court,
Barroon,
Castle Donington,
DE74 2PE

Monday August 17, 6pm – 7.30pm

Parkview
Church Lane,
Whitwick,
LE67 5DJ

Tuesday August 18, 1pm – 2.30pm

St Mary's Court,
St. Marys Avenue,
Donington Le Heath,
LE67 2HR

Monday August 24, 6pm – 7.30pm

Central Court,
Avenue Road,
Coalville,
LE67 3PY

Wednesday August 26, 6pm – 7:30pm

Norman Court,
Whatton Road,
Kegworth,
DE74 2FE

Wednesday September 2, 12noon – 1:30pm

Hood Court
North Street,
Ashby de la Zouch,
LE65 1HY

Older Persons Support Service

Questions and Answers

1. Why does the service have to change?

The funding to provide the service is changing as Leicestershire County Council has given us notice that from 30 September 2015, we will no longer be receiving the £306,000 per year grant which helps to fund the 24 hour Control Centre and the Older Persons Support Service.

2. Will I still get a visit from the Support Officer?

We will have to reduce the number of people we visit, although we will continue to provide a visiting support service to those with the greatest support need. We will be deciding who we will still be visiting over the coming weeks which will ensure those who need the service will still receive the visits. If your visits are changing we will be contacting you before the end of September to discuss this.

3. Will I keep the pull cords?

Yes, there are no plans to remove the pull cords from supported/sheltered properties. Tenants currently pay for the maintenance of the pull cords through a service charge and we will be exploring the option of introducing a service charge to cover the staffing costs of the Control Centre as part of the review.

4. Will the Control Centre continue to be based in Coalville?

Yes, we plan to keep the Control Centre as a Council run service based in Coalville.

5. Will I still have to pay for the Support Service?

Yes, there will be a new charge as part of your rent, and the payments due to Leicestershire County Council will no longer be payable.

6. Where will the Support Officers be based?

The dedicated team of Support Officers will be based in the District, working from some of our existing sheltered scheme buildings.

7. Will I be able to opt out of receiving the service?

This is something we will be exploring as part of the review currently underway.

8. Will the Council still be able to help with providing monitoring equipment?

Yes. This is known as Assistive Technology and an area which we want to grow in the future.

9. Will the Council be able to provide social activities?

Yes. By focusing on visiting those with the most support need, the Support Officers will be able to provide some support through community social activities at sheltered schemes instead of visiting customers with lower level support needs at home.

10. When will the changes be implemented, and how can I find out more?

The changes will be introduced in early October 2015, and if you want to know more please come along to one of our question and answer sessions advertised in this letter.