

GROVE HOUSE SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME

Report of the Director of Derby Homes

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Policy Committee on 17 October 2001 agreed that a programme of sheltered housing scheme reviews would take place, and that the outcome of these reviews would be reported back to members.
- 1.2 A report to housing co-ordination on 13 March 2001 explained the process of individual scheme reviews. The report explained that further reports to Derby Homes Board and the Council Cabinet would be prepared if a scheme is recommended for closure.
- 1.3 This report explains that Grove House appears not to be viable, as a sheltered housing scheme and that the remaining residents should be rehoused and the scheme then closed. Options for the future use of the scheme will then be investigated and reported back.
- 1.4 The report also explains that consultation with the 11 remaining residents indicates that a majority would favour a move to another sheltered accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To recommend to the Council Cabinet that the remaining residents of Grove House are rehoused as a priority and receive home loss and disturbance payments.
- 2.2 To agree that Grove House is closed as a sheltered housing scheme, and the Director of Policy is asked to investigate options for the future use of Grove House building and /or site, and report back to the Cabinet on the outcome.

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Information About Grove House

- 3.1.1 Grove House is situated off Grove Street at the City end of Normanton Road. On one side Grove House faces the direct access hostel on Hartington Street and on the other side Grove House is immediately adjacent to the Arboretum.

- 3.1.2 Grove House was constructed in 1975 and comprises 24 bedsit flats on two storeys. On each floor there are 4 shared bathrooms. The scheme comprises a corridor design with flats off, together with a small and a large communal lounge and small kitchen. The scheme also has a lift and laundry.
- 3.1.3 An analysis of the waiting list shows no demand or interest in accommodation at Grove House. The availability of bedsit flats has been advertised in the past with very little response. There are now only 11 residents remaining at Grove House.
- 3.1.4 The warden's position has been vacant since 6 August 2001. Wardens from adjacent schemes have provided cover. There has been significant turnover in the number of wardens over recent years. The location of the scheme and the nature of the accommodation have meant that attracting suitable applicants for the post has proved extremely difficult in the past.
- 3.1.5 There are concerns about the safety and security of residents. A number of elderly people on the scheme have been victims of burglary in spite of the 24-hour emergency alarm. There have been incidents of elderly people being subject to more general anti-social behaviour and harassment from drug users, alcoholics and prostitutes.
- 3.1.6 Because of these concerns, a private security contractor has been employed to provide a security guard between the hours of 10.00pm and 8.00am. In addition, the Community Watch Patrol make two visits to the site between 4.00pm and 10.00pm each day.

3.2 The Review Process

- 3.2.1 The report to Housing Co-ordination explained that the review process would involve an analysis of:
- Supply and demand
 - The existing facilities at the scheme
 - Costs and income
 - Future options

3.3 Supply and demand

- 3.3.1 In Derby there are currently 2,637 sheltered housing units provided by the City Council, with an additional 1,491 units provided by housing associations.
- 3.3.2 A comparison of the eleven English Major City authorities shows that Derby has the highest number of sheltered units per head amongst the 60+ population. Derby also has the highest number of sheltered units per head for the 45+age group. This indicates that there is an over supply of

sheltered accommodation in Derby and that the situation is unlikely to improve in coming years.

3.3.3 This problem is particularly acute in the Normanton area of the City. Of the 24 available bedsits at Grove House, only 11 are now let. The void level at the scheme has gradually increased over the past few years. The turnover rate on sheltered schemes is higher than for general needs accommodation in any case, and we have been unable to find sufficient tenants to keep the scheme fully occupied.

3.3.4 There are a number of sheltered housing schemes in the Normanton area. In addition to schemes managed by Derby Homes, there are several managed by Housing Associations. All of these schemes suffer from low demand. However the Housing Association schemes are much more modern and appealing to potential residents. Derby Homes other two schemes, Oakvale House and Fairedene Court also have significant void levels, but generally we can find tenants for them. This is partly because they are more modern and have a better surrounding environment.

3.4 Capital costs

3.4.1 Considerable capital funding has been put into Grove House during the last 3 years in an attempt to improve security and the appearance of the communal areas. It was hoped that this would help attract new tenants. Spending included:

- New video door entry system £25,000
- Internal lobby refurbishment £60,000.

3.4.2 Bringing the scheme up to acceptable letting standards would require some or all of the existing bedsits to be converted to 2 bedroomed flats. This has been done at other schemes but is expensive. A single conversion would cost approximately £20,000.

3.4.3 This means that converting all units would cost approximately £400,000. This in turn would result in reduced rental income, because of the overall reduction in units of accommodation.

3.4.4 If Grove House remains open as a sheltered Housing scheme, then the following capital works will be required during 2002 - 2006 (with estimated costs) and are currently planned, but are held pending the outcome of the scheme review

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| • UPVC double glazing | £40,000 |
| • Kitchen refurbishment | £36,000 |
| • New bathrooms | £31,200 |
| • Replacement heating boilers | £25,000 |
| Total | £133,000 |

- 3.4.5 I am satisfied that even with this level of spend the demand for the accommodation as a sheltered housing scheme would remain very low.

3.5 Scheme closure

- 3.5.1 The decision to close the scheme would allow the rehousing of the remaining residents, as speedily as possible. The management of this process would be undertaken with consideration of the age of the residents, and in consultation with them and their relatives or carers.

3.6 Future options for the scheme

It is proposed that following the decision to close Grove House the Director of Policy commence an options appraisal and prepare a report on the future use of Grove House.

CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The report to Housing Coordination of 13 March 2002 explained that full consultation will take place with residents and their relatives. Consultation has also taken place with ward councillors and with the Director of Social Services.
- 4.2 An initial scheme meeting with residents, their relatives and friends was held on Friday 17 May. Of the 11 remaining residents, 6 attended the meeting, together with their relatives and friends. Other residents were represented at the meeting.
- 4.3 Following the meeting, all residents were visited individually. This was done with their relatives or friends present where this was requested. A questionnaire was completed with the residents. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as an appendix to this report.
- 4.4 Following the initial consultation meeting and the one to one visits, of the 11 residents
- 4 indicated that they would definitely want to move
 - 5 told us that they would consider moving and indicated a preference for where they would be prepared to move to
 - 2 indicated that they would prefer not to move
- 4.5 A further scheme meeting with residents and their relatives and friends was held on 10 July 2002. The meeting was attended by all but one of the residents.
- 4.6 At that meeting, all the process of scheme review and the outcome of the initial consultation was explained. All residents were reassured that in the event of the scheme having to close, their relocation would be dealt with in a sensitive way, and that their needs and wishes would be met wherever possible.

- 4.7 It was explained that if a decision to close the scheme is taken by the Council, then a reasonable period of several months would then be given to arrange the relocation of the remaining tenants. Many of the tenants have already started to discuss with staff where they would like to move to. It was explained that we will take residents to view a number of properties together with their relatives, and that tenants will have plenty of choice. Every effort will be made to ensure that the residents at Grove House are happy with their new homes.
- 4.8 It was explained that Derby Homes will organise and pay for removals, and that home loss payments of £1,500 will be paid to each resident.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Continuing to run Grove House as a sheltered housing scheme is not cost effective.
- 5.2 If the current level of occupancy is maintained then the total annual rental income is estimated at £34,300. Annual running costs, day to day repairs and site supervision or security is estimated at £40,800 a year. In addition there are maintenance expenditure planned at £133,000 over the next four years.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6. The Housing Acts requires that tenants be consulted on any proposals to change their housing service, or that effect their home. The consultation already carried out will continue, and tenants and their relatives and carers kept informed of the outcome of this meeting and the progress made on their rehousing.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7. The Housing Acts requires that tenants be consulted on any proposals to change their housing service, or that effect their home. The consultation already carried out will continue, and tenants and their relatives and carers kept informed of the outcome of this meeting and the progress made on their rehousing.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8. The Grove Street area backs onto Hartington Street and the Arboretum. Any proposals for reuse or redevelopment of the site will need to compliment the proposals for renewal of these areas.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9. Any proposals for reuse or redevelopment will need to take into account the needs of the local BME community.



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