



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Agenda Item 9

Member Question to Housing Committee – 20 December 2016

QUESTION FROM	QUESTION TO
Councillor Liz Peters	Councillor Mattie Ross
<p>1. Are communal lounges still regarded as extensions of residents' homes in sheltered schemes?</p>	<p>This term has been used within the sheltered housing sector for many years and probably means different things to different people.</p> <p>I am sure we would all agree that the lounge area is one which must be open to all tenants of sheltered schemes to freely use and to socialise in, holding activities for the benefit of all residents. However, we must also remember that its use must have respect to other residents, avoiding disturbance and nuisance, being left in an untidy state for others to use, being used to store tenant property, and so on.</p> <p>The council, as the landlord, also has a number of responsibilities towards tenants, including their welfare and safety, which means that, with regard to communal facilities, we have a duty to all residents to prevent inappropriate use.</p> <p>Our sheltered residents are a great bunch of people and we seldom have reason to raise any concerns about the use of communal room.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>1. Why are residents being asked for public liability insurance if they are running events which include family members or residents from other schemes.</p>	<p>This request was made in reference to a specific event held by tenants where a bouncy castle and ball pit were hired and used for children to play, at a party in one of our schemes. This event occurred without reference to any member of staff, who would, had they known about it before hand, raised issues about the potential for risk from the trip hazard of loose balls from the ball pit, or injury on a bouncy castle to a child. The council's insurance policy would not have covered injury in these circumstances, and so the importance of the event holder having public liability insurance to cover injury was considered both important and relevant.</p>

	<p>It should be noted, that events planned by residents should be discussed with the landlord, in advance as advice on issues such as this, can be raised and resolved in advance.</p>
<p>2. Are we trying to reduce social isolation for our older residents by operating a hub and spoke system?</p>	<p>We are certainly trying to address social isolation, not only in our schemes but also for elderly residents living nearby. We cannot operate a formal hub and spoke model as we receive no funding to do so, but we are working with as many local charities and groups as possible, to organise an run events in our sheltered schemes for residents and neighbours, in line with this model.</p> <p>Some examples of these events, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craft & Chat – Sherbourne/Grove Park • Better Balance – Glebelands/Willow Rd/Concord Hse • Lungs for Life – Sherbourne • Lunch clubs – various • Coffee Mornings – most, if not all • Golden Oldies – Sherbourne • Move it or loose it – George Pearce/Grange View/St Nicholas • World Jungle Memory Cafe – Springfield Court/Dryleaze Court • Day Centre – Sherbourne/Hazelwood/Hamfallow/Concord/Ashwell • Health and Beauty Sessions (with Stroud College) - Grange View/Walter Preston/Ashwell House/Jenner Court <p>We also run quarterly events throughout our sheltered housing, in October this involved an introduction to Boccia, an indoor soft ball version of bowls, with a Boccia set donated to every scheme, we have also recently held our 2016 Sheltered’s Got Talent.</p> <p>Staff, have also helped residents to support the charity McMillan Nurses, helping in the running of coffee mornings to raise money throughout our stock, which was very well supported by residents and neighbours.</p> <p>Whilst we have many successes, with schemes having varied and regular social activities, success throughout the district has remained patchy, partly because of the availability and locality of such groups and partly because of social and demographic issues such as levels of interest amongst residents, etc.</p>

	<p>We have and will continue to support such activities as best we can, recognising that they offer a benefit to residents as well as neighbours alike and, where all tenants benefit, we will ensure that these communal facilities are made available free of any charge. This also applies to other events such as the holding of birthday parties for scheme residents and parties for annual holiday and celebratory events. It should also be noted that with all of the above, we hold responsibility for ensuring that issues of health and safety, welfare, etc., are paramount, and that any group running an activity within one of our sheltered housing schemes does so with this in mind and either has their own insurance or where appropriate is covered by our own.</p> <p>Other activities occur from time to time these generally involve external clubs booking the room for a meeting or event, where a fee is charged, the proceeds of which will be made available for the schemes residents to use for their own social activities. Responsibility for resident welfare remains paramount, and we will, on a case by case basis, assess the issues attached to any request for use, and the restrictions we might apply. Always, the first question asked will be, 'is this use to the benefit of residents?'</p>
<p>Supplementary Question 2. Why are so many restrictions being place on residents and their families who are trying to operate social events?</p>	<p>I would be interested to learn which restrictions you are referring to here, as I do not believe that this is the case.</p> <p>To be clear, we fully support the use by residents of community rooms to hold as many resident focussed activities as possible. However, I do not consider it unreasonable for us to require that any activity being planned, particularly one which may, potentially, present a risk, noise nuisance or inconvenience to other residents is raised with staff first, so that we can find the best solution. Remember, we have a duty to all tenants and their welfare, not just those wishing to hold an event. This is not a change in policy, we have for many years expected that the use of community rooms is for the benefit of tenants, considers others and that our residents work in partnership with staff to overcome any issue which may cause a problem, such as the issue of insurance raised earlier.</p>
<p>3 Why are residents being asked to have food hygiene certificates, when having pop up events in the communal lounges?</p>	<p>When hot food is to be consumed within a communal lounge, and not inside a tenants own flat, a degree of responsibility for welfare falls on the council for the welfare of residents.</p> <p>We sensibly ask that residents preparing such food for communal events attend a short</p>

	<p>course to obtain a food hygiene certificate, a course which the council pays for, and which, to my understanding of feedback from those who have attended: most, if not all, found it an enjoyable and social activity.</p> <p>Whilst we certainly do not doubt the skills ability and commitment of those preparing such food, this approach, we hope, is a contribution to ensuring that a happy party or event is not followed by an upset stomach or other illness, which is very much in compliance with our duty of care to residents.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question 3. Will Councillors be required to have them when cooking and supplying a Christmas meal as we have done for the past two years?</p>	<p>I have myself cooked for many communal events, and have completed a food hygiene certificate, as I am aware have other members. I think that you raise a good point in your question and I would encourage any member to take up this opportunity to undertake this useful and very beneficial course.</p>
<p>Councillor Debbie Young</p>	<p>Councillor Mattie Ross</p>
<p>1. I would like to welcome Ian Allen the 1st tenant representative to Housing Committee. At the last meeting I asked how much it cost to recruit tenant representatives to Housing Committee. I was promised a response which I still have not had. Please could I be told how much it has cost tenants to recruit tenant members to Housing Committee</p>	<p>I apologise that you have not had the figures you were promised.</p> <p>The decision to appoint tenants to join the housing committee was made with the understanding that the appointment would be made based on the experience of the tenant representative and that the selection process would be independent and not influenced by members or officers. We therefore ran an advertising campaign to seek nominations and appointed an independent tenant adviser to undertake this for us by being the point of focus for applicants as well as undertaking the selection interview process. The whole cost being approximately £7000. It should be noted here that this is comparable with the cost of advertising and recruiting for a new member of staff. I should also like to add, that the new tenant involvement structure, even with this recruitment cost included, is less now than it was with the SCHF.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question 1. Will the same amount of money be charged to find the second tenant representative to sit on Housing Committee?</p>	<p>I can confirm, as I said at the meeting of 20th December that it will not. Using the same independent organisation to complete this phase, we have agreed a slightly lower fee, because previous work on planning and preparation has already been done, and as a result of other changes made to the process, including the use of the December issue of keynotes to advertise, instead of commercial advertising, we have reduced the cost by</p>

	nearly a half.
<p>2. As Cllr Doina Cornell raised the very important issue of safeguarding in regards to sheltered housing. Do we undertake background checks on any of our tenant representatives regardless of who they represent.</p> <p>DBS – Disclosure Barring Service – Formerly CRB</p>	<p>DBS checks are required where a person will be in a position to present a potential risk to another; for example, in a housing context where they may be required to enter the homes of tenants, potentially being alone with that tenant and where contact may be had with potentially vulnerable persons. Our tenant inspectors are DBS checked, as much for their own protection as for our other tenants. This is similar to the process we employ in terms of checks on staff, who visit tenants at home.</p> <p>We do not DBS check other tenant representatives as we believe that their activities fall outside of the regulations and that such checks are not required in these cases. It should also be noted that these representatives are elected to their role, just as we as members are. Neither of us is elected subject to a DBS check.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>2. Given that we are appointing two tenant representatives to Housing Committee who would have the same rights to visit people in their own homes would it be sensible for them to have DBS checks</p>	<p>The role of these representatives is to offer a voice for our tenants on the Housing Committee. They will clearly work with our wider tenant body, mainly through attendance at resident group meetings such as the tenants and residents forum. I do not envisage them undertaking home visits as they are not expected to undertake individual constituency case work which remains the responsibility of elected members. Were this position to change, I would expect that we indeed review the position regarding DBS checking for the same reasons I have given in the case of tenant inspectors.</p>
<p>3. Could you explain to new members what the Environmental Fund is?</p>	<p>The Environmental Fund a fund available for use in/on communal areas to improve the environment, enhance quality or surroundings. It is available for both Sheltered Housing and General Needs.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>3. Are people still able to apply for funding from that fund?</p>	<p>Yes; however, we are looking at the benefit of this scheme and will be discussing it in partnership with the tenants and residents forum in the new year, to review its benefit and value for money and identify any changes which may be appropriate.</p>

Councillor Julie Job	Councillor Mattie Ross
<p>1 How many complaints have been received from residents of sheltered housing, by email, phone or in person?</p>	<p>We need to distinguish here between formal complaints and service issues and requests.</p> <p>Onsite service issues, regarding a concern, dealt with and resolved by the site officer or other member of staff are not recorded.</p> <p>Formal complaints made, which may include a service issue raised by a tenant which was not satisfactorily resolved, are recorded.</p> <p>We have recorded 9 formal complaints since April 2016.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>1 How many complaints have gone to second tier?</p>	<p>From April 2016 there have been no complaints escalated to Level 2; however, there is one complaint currently being responded to at level 1 by a Head of Service.</p>
<p>2 Into what categories do these breakdown?</p>	<p>These break down as follows:</p> <p>Dealing with a nuisance complaint/ant social behaviour:2 Repairs not completed: 2 Cleaning: 1 Decant: 3 Benefits: 1</p> <p>In addition, a combined complaint has been received from residents in one scheme which raises several issues and which has been responded to by a Head of Service, but is not closed and remains ongoing. This complaint includes the three decant complaints recorded above, but also addresses other issues.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>2 How many do you anticipate going to the ombudsman and how much will it cost the taxpayer?</p>	<p>Any complainant is entitled to take their complaint to the ombudsmen, we have no control over this. Our role as a council and landlord is to deal with the complaint correctly and fairly.</p>

	In answer to your question, I am confident that any complaint made will not be upheld as I expect that we have dealt with all, both correctly and fairly. We also seek to resolve issues as early as possible, avoiding the need to escalate this. As to cost, with none having been made, I cannot quantify this.
3 Are all communal kitchens registered with Environmental Health as food providers?	<p>The communal kitchens in our sheltered housing schemes are not run commercially and do not provide food other than that cooked by residents for residents at communal events. They are not required to be registered with environmental health therefore.</p> <p>This is no different to the situation applying to community and church halls, for example.</p> <p>However, aware of the health issues attached to food preparation, as I have stated in my answer to Cllr Peter's question, we do ask tenants to undertake a fully funded food hygiene certificate course, provided for us by Stroud College and organised with tenants by our housing service.</p>
Councillor Philip McAsey	Councillor Mattie Ross
1. What is the process for residents who are being asked to move as sheltered schemes are being redeveloped?	<p>Please can I refer you to the Decant Policy which was passed by this committee. It can be found on the hub:</p> <p><i>Policies, Strategies, Service Standard & Procedures>Policies.</i></p>
Supplementary Question 1 Have there been any changes to this service?	No
2. As I wasn't a member of Housing Committee or even the Council when changes were made to Sheltered Housing, could you briefly tell me what was decided on Site Officers, Support Officers?	<p>I am afraid that this question is a little unclear in terms of what you wish to know about 'what was decided regarding the site and support officers?'</p> <p>I have therefore assumed that you are referring to their role. Before I explain this, it is worth understanding the reason for this change, which were, that in 2014 the County Council informed us that they were making changes to the way that supporting people funding would be spent. This funding amounted to £500,000 and funded our sheltered housing</p>

	<p>officers, who provided what was then a resident and in some cases, non resident, warden service. This would mean that we would no longer continue to receive this funding level or any certainty of future funding, to be able to provide our residents with this service.</p> <p>The County Council let a contract to provide overall adult support, on a three year contract, a service to which our tenants receive, but on a need assessed basis.</p> <p>After reviewing the service we provide, we developed a self funded model which I would summarise as follows:</p> <p>The Support Worker will provide housing related support to tenants on a need assessed basis. This enables them to spend as long as is required to those who genuinely need support, a service which has proven to be extremely effective and beneficial to our tenants, and I am delighted to say that we have many examples of the excellent work undertaken.</p> <p>The Site Officer is responsible for buildings and grounds and will spend time at each of the schemes they are responsible for, every day. Their role involves looking after the sheltered scheme itself, including: cleaning, H&S checks, grounds maintenance work in some cases, as well as being the council representative on site for tenants to go to on issues such as repairs (some of which can be undertaken by the site officer), the site officer may refer cases to the support team to visit the tenant to discuss and agree a support plan. Again, this team has proven to have been very successful with some very positive feedback received.</p> <p>We undertook two satisfaction surveys of sheltered tenants, these were in 2014, before the change and in early 2016, after the change. I am pleased to say that satisfaction levels increased.</p> <p>I would like to take this opportunity to invite any member of this committee, to meet with our site officers and support workers, and if anyone wishes to do this, our sheltered team have confirmed that they would be very happy to arrange for this to happen and for you to learn and see more about the role they perform and the work they do.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question 2 Apart from tenant surveys how do we monitor this?</p>	<p>We hold scheme meetings to include tenant feedback on the service they receive. Site Officers have held pop in meetings. We also hold quarterly functions whereby tenants have the opportunity to have their say. All held locally on sheltered schemes.</p>

	<p>These teams are managed by a Principal Officer and meet with staff, conduct individual staff 1-2-1 and performance development meetings, team meetings and set targets and standards for the service based on their finding and the services needs.</p>
<p>3. How many site and support officers were planned initially, how many are there now?</p>	<p>We originally employed six support workers and we still do. I think it is also important to say here that it is testament to the service that these staff, have expressed their satisfaction in their role, finding it more rewarding, with the opportunity to make a real difference. As a result, we have had very little absence and employ the same six staff now as we did when we started this new service in January 2015. This could not be said of the previous structure.</p> <p>With regard to site officers, our original structure employed 14 staff, but when a vacancy later arose and we considered how well the team had performed, our sheltered team managers were confident that with minor changes, we could operate successfully with 13 staff. This was found to be correct, and we still employ 13 in this team.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question 3 How many hours do site officers and managers spend on site and how much of this time has this been affected by the drop in the number of staff?</p>	<p>Site Officers are on site to carry out housing management functions as listed above. The time is variable as footprint of buildings is very different. They are flexible with timings as their role also includes light unplanned maintenance in and around the scheme.</p> <p>Since reducing from 14 to 13 staff there has been no negative impact – the service continues to run efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>We do however; make best use of their time by scheduling specific projects with small teams made up from these staff. These are scheduled to take staff away from their sites for a limited period, with their sites benefit reciprocally as a result. These projects have included: jet washing pathways, laying new paving for a resident patio area to support garden use in the summer, tackling and completing garden and bush tidying works, for example.</p> <p>They will of course; baring emergency, be at each site daily. We also cover sickness and holiday, so that no site is left without a site officer attendance.</p>

