

	<b>Executive</b>	<b>Agenda Item No.</b>  <b>6</b>
<b>Title</b>	Charges for Lifeline services - new tenants of designated properties  Proposal for management changes to stock identified for older people, including the removal of the lettings age restriction for Stamford Garden and Radcliffe Gardens	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>	Lisa Barker: Head of Housing <a href="mailto:lisa.barker@warwickdc.gov.uk">lisa.barker@warwickdc.gov.uk</a>  Caroline Russell Sustaining Tenancies Manager <a href="mailto:caroline.russell@warwickdc.gov.uk">caroline.russell@warwickdc.gov.uk</a>  James Baker Housing Support & Lifeline Manager <a href="mailto:james.Baker@warwick.gov.uk">james.Baker@warwick.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>	All	
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b>	No	
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>	08/02/2017 Housing Related Support Services Minute number 91	
<b>Background Papers</b>	Housing Related Support Services Executive 8/02/2017	

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	Yes 967
<b>Equality and Fairness Impact Assessment (E&amp;FIA) Undertaken</b>	

<b>Officer/Councillor Approval</b>		
<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Deputy Chief Executive	03/09/2019	Bill Hunt
Head of Service	03/09/2019	Lisa Barker
CMT	03/09/2019	Chris Elliott
Section 151 Officer	03/09/2019	Mike Snow

Monitoring Officer	03/09/2019	Andrew Jones
Finance	03/09/2019	Victoria Bamber
Portfolio Holder(s)	03/09/2019	Cllr Jan Matecki
<b>Consultation &amp; Community Engagement</b>		
None		
<b>Final Decision?</b>	no	
<b>Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)</b>		
Full Council to approve.		

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report contains two proposals
- 1.2 Firstly, it considers a proposal to make consistent the service provision and the charging structures for tenants who live in age-designated properties within the district.
- 1.3 Secondly, to consider a proposal to give a more focused service to our older customers living in designated and age appropriate stock, this also involves a change to the letting restriction for two blocks, which are currently age designated, to general needs.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Executive recommends to Council that the Lifeline basic service be provided as a standard feature in all designated properties (Appendix 1) but that the service is introduced on a gradual basis as the current tenants move on.
- 2.2 That Executive recommends to Council the removal of the age restriction at Stamford Court and Radcliffe Gardens properties as detailed at Appendix 2.

## 3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 To comply with legislation to achieve designated status, a property is required to be provided for a particular community and to offer facilities as standard, over and above that of a general needs property. Most commonly, the facilities offered by housing providers include for an alarm. The current policy is that tenants who live in designated properties that are not part of a scheme can opt out of the lifeline service. Whilst this is attractive in terms of customer choice, it brings into question whether the properties can be classed as designated.

If it were successfully argued that a property is not designated, the Right to Buy would apply. Whilst the concept of older people purchasing their home is welcomed, it leads to problems later on when that property is subsequently sold. There are examples of younger people buying these properties and a consequence of different lifestyles has led to older people feeling at the least disturbed to feeling afraid and fearful of their surroundings and possible increase in anti-social behaviour. By having the Lifeline service in the property permanently, an enhanced support offer can be delivered for those residents. This could mean that residents may be able to stay in their homes longer, rather than move to a property with additional support. It will also help people

be discharged from hospital more quickly as the service will be in place from when they move in.

It is proposed to reintroduce the charges as current tenants move on. Therefore, there is no adverse impact to the current residents. However, no further tenants will be permitted to opt out of the scheme.

A full list of properties to be classed as designated can be found at Appendix 1.

- 3.2 It is proposed that we will provide an enhanced property owner offer for residents living in age designated and sheltered scheme properties, this will include working with those residents in the community to facilitate activities where those communities request them. It is proposed that we will develop several tiers of service available to residents, to those living in sheltered scheme, to those living in schemes with community centres and to those living in age designated properties. We propose that housing staff will be more visible at these schemes and estates and will work with the community to help develop a further sense of community, linking in with other residents in nearby properties. This will support a wider housing strategy for older and disabled people.

This offer involves the consideration of properties that are age designated and whether this is the correct way to manage the stock that WDC has. Therefore, a removal of the letting restriction is proposed for the properties at Stamford and Radcliffe Gardens. These are both high-rise tower blocks and classed as age restricted properties, and are let only to tenants who are over the age of 55. Due to changes in demographic, properties available and issues with access in the block, we are proposing that this age restriction is now removed. To manage the block more effectively and to reduce the risk substantially would be to change the resident profile to those with less vulnerability would mean to remove the age restriction. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service have indicated that it is a concern for so many vulnerable people to be located in a high-rise accommodation. It is proposed that this change happens organically and there is no wholesale decant of the blocks, we would work with our current residents to carry out a series of moves to more appropriate age related designated stock amongst our sheltered or age designated housing properties.

A full list of properties at Stamford Gardens and Radcliffe Gardens can be found at Appendix 2.

#### 4. **Policy Framework**

##### 4.1 **Fit for the Future (FFF)**

The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things, the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects.

The FFF Strategy has three strands – People, Services and Money and each has an external and internal element to it. The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

<b>FFF Strands</b>		
<b>People</b>	<b>Services</b>	<b>Money</b>
<b>External</b>		
<b>Health, Homes, Communities</b>	<b>Green, Clean, Safe</b>	<b>Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment</b>
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Improved health for all Housing needs for all met Impressive cultural and sports activities Cohesive and active communities	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Area has well looked after public spaces All communities have access to decent open space Improved air quality Low levels of crime and ASB	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Dynamic and diverse local economy Vibrant town centres Improved performance/productivity of local economy Increased employment and income levels
<b>Impacts of Proposal</b>		
The proposal aims to ensure the provision of suitable housing and support for older people across the district.	Lifeline assists with keeping older and vulnerable people safe in their own homes	None.
<b>Internal</b>		
<b>Effective Staff</b>	<b>Maintain or Improve Services</b>	<b>Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term</b>
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> All staff are properly trained All staff have the appropriate tools All staff are engaged, empowered and supported The right people are in the right job with the right skills and right behaviours	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Focusing on our customers' needs Continuously improve our processes Increase the digital provision of services	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Better return/use of our assets Full Cost accounting Continued cost management Maximise income earning opportunities Seek best value for money
<b>Impacts of Proposal</b>		
None	Enables the Lifeline service to have a secure customer base and guaranteed income. Enables a continuing support service for older and vulnerable tenants.	Secures a long-term additional rental income for the Housing Revenue Account.

## 4.2 Supporting Strategies

Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies and the relevant ones for this proposal are explained here.

- The HRA Business Plan contributes to the Fit for the Future transformation programme and assists the Council to deliver its Vision
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget and the HRA Business Plan are the financial expressions of the Council's housing policies.

#### 4.3 Changes to Existing Policies

This report does not bring forward changes to existing policies, however there would be a change to the lettings process for our own housing stock if the proposed to remove the age restriction at the two blocks of flats

**4.3 Impact Assessment** – The first proposal will provide housing principally for older and vulnerable groups. There is ongoing demand for sheltered housing services from Warwick District Council.

The second proposal would increase the availability of housing stock for younger working age people, this would be desirable as both blocks are centrally located

#### 5. Budgetary Framework

5.1 The table below sets out the current funding arrangements for the housing related support services provided, and the funding arrangements outlined in the new proposal:

		Existing	New Proposal
Expenditure	Staffing	£737,400	£737,800
	Supplies & Services	£230,600	£230,600
	Support Services	£164,400	£164,400
	Other expenditure	£13,100	£13,100
<b>Expenditure Total</b>		<b>£1,145,900</b>	<b>£1,145,900</b>
Income	Charges (Designated properties)	-£233,841	-£375,931
	Charges (Private)	-£105,400	-£105,400
	Other Income	-£128,600	-£128,600
<b>Income Total</b>		<b>-£467,841</b>	<b>-£609,931</b>
<b>NET HRA COST</b>		<b>£678,059</b>	<b>£535,969</b>

5.2 If approved the HRA contribution to the service will be reduced by £142090.

5.3 This charge is not fully eligible for Housing benefit or Universal Credit, the monitoring charges (currently £3.65 per week) are classed as an ineligible service charge in Housing Benefit regulations, and as such any Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claim would not pay this part of the lifeline charge. Over 50% of Sheltered Housing tenants do not claim housing benefit as they have sufficient income or savings to pay rent and living costs. An assessment of affordability is always completed as part of our process to settle new tenants into their home and to ensure that they can manage financially.

#### 6. Risks

6.1 These properties are classed as designated stock for people who are 55+. If these properties do not have an additional feature which demonstrate why they need to be designated stock, the Council is open to challenge, including that properties should be let as part of general needs stock and be subject to the

right to buy. There is also a risk if this proposal is not approved, that over time the ability of the council to meet the needs of older people will diminish.

## **7. Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1 Do nothing: WDC could continue how it currently operates and leave designated property tenancies with the option of taking the lifeline service. This would negatively affect potential income and possibly leave us open to challenge about the nature of the stock. It would not offer the best protection for older and vulnerable people.

## **8. Background**

- 8.1 Within our housing stock, there are 1449 designated properties and these are located across the district. Of these 186 properties are contained within five large schemes.
- 8.2 As part of the redesign of lifeline services and housing support a decision was made that designated properties would be allowed to opt in and opt out at any time. Details were contained within a report that went to executive in February 2017. Executive approved that tenants of (non scheme) designated dwellings could opt in and opt out.
- 8.3 The lifeline service is offered to WDC tenants to enable them to live in their homes and remain independent for longer. Lifeline also provides services to private residents across south Warwickshire to not only help them to stay in their home longer but provide WDC an income to support providing the Lifeline service.
- 8.4 There has been an increase in WDC staff presence at our high-rise blocks over the last two years, notably carrying out daily inspections for all high-rise blocks; also, the housing team conducts an annual visit to every tenant in a high-rise flat. This has highlighted issues and concerns regarding the vulnerabilities of some of our residents in those blocks. There is a concern about how we can safely manage the blocks for our residents if there was an emergency and residents needed to exit the blocks quickly. Due to the age restriction on these two blocks, those concerns have become more apparent, we have completed works to act as a mitigation to reduce the risk, including 60-minute fire doors, new alarm systems and the daily checks previously mentioned.
- 8.5 WDC currently has 1449 properties that are designated for use by older customers. The impact of removing the age restriction would reduce this by 110 units. This does not mean that people over 55 could not bid for these properties however, it means that people less than 55 can. The proposal to offer an enhanced service for our customers in older person schemes is focussing on delivering a more focused service and developing community and activities that the communities can become involved in, whilst also providing an extra staff presence from housing for that additional service and availability we can offer.