

AGEING WELL IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE – OLDER PEOPLES' HOUSING STRATEGY

(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 1st December 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) considered a report by the Head of Housing Services on the draft Older Peoples' Housing Strategy entitled "Ageing Well in Huntingdonshire: Housing and Healthy Ageing for Older People 2009 - 2014". This report contains a summary of the Panel's discussions.

2. COMMENTS

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health has informed the Panel of the background to the Strategy a previous version of which was adopted by the Council in 2005. The Panel has acknowledged that Huntingdonshire will experience dramatic changes in its residents' age profile with a considerable increase in the number of people aged 65 years in the coming years. Older people will also become a significantly greater proportion of the local population. The Strategy has been produced in partnership with NHS Cambridgeshire and it aims to promote healthy ageing and to improve the quality of life for older people in Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2 The Strategy contains reference to measures, which can be introduced within individual homes, to enable people to remain in their homes. Members have been advised that 72% of those aged 65+ within the District own their own homes and that wherever possible, older people are encouraged to live independently. The objectives of the Strategy focus on four key areas; namely providing support to older people, undertaking home adaptations; employing more energy efficient measures within homes and providing "extra care" services to the elderly.
- 2.3 With regard to extra care, clarification has been received that these services include sheltered housing and a "Handypersons" scheme. The housing schemes include a range of communal facilities and 24 hour nursing care provided by the Primary Care Trust. Whilst this requires a significant amount of resources, the Panel has recognised that this option is more affordable to the older generation when compared to residential care. At the same time it promotes older people's independence. The Panel has discussed whether extra care facilities might be provided in smaller settlements to enable people to continue to live locally. As they might qualify as "exceptions" this could have the added benefit of making land acquisition cheaper. It has, however, been reported that these facilities need to be of sufficient size to justify the cost of on-site carers. Ideally, they would need to accommodate 40 residents to be viable, though a new facility being constructed in Huntingdon will cater for slightly fewer individuals. Members have supported the adoption of a flexible approach towards the type of tenure residents will be able to take.

- 2.4 In acknowledging that Occupational Therapist assessments are a necessary part of the process for home adaptations, Members of the Panel have questioned the time it currently takes for assessments to be completed. They have been advised that the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health is currently pursuing this matter directly with the Primary Care Trust and Community Care Services and it has been agreed that the Notes of meetings, together with the Terms of Reference for a Working Group, which has been established to consider the matter, will be made available to Members of the Panel for information. It has been reported that some progress has been made as a result of this intervention.
- 2.5 The Panel has questioned the figures presented within the report and made comments in relation to the affordability of home adaptations. Other matters that have been discussed include the locality of the sheltered "extra care" services and whether the age of those to whom the Strategy applies should be raised from 65+ years to 75+ years. Finally, comments have been made on the need for more care accommodation to be provided for elderly couples.
- 2.6 Having received assurances that the Action Plan appended to the Strategy can be met through existing resources, the Panel has stressed that care in the home should not automatically be seen as the solution to all situations with a choice between options being made available whenever possible.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is invited to consider the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) as part of its deliberations on the report by the Head of Housing Services.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Minutes and Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on 1st December 2009.

**Contact Officer: Miss H Ali, Democratic Services Officer
(01480) 388006**