

# Derbyshire County Council

## Improvement and Scrutiny Committee - People

4 November 2020

### Oversight of Next Steps in Relation to Direct Care Homes for Older People

#### Progress Report

#### 1. Purpose of the Report

To inform the Committee of the progress made by the working group in overseeing the next steps in relation to direct care homes for older people, and to seek agreement to submit an interim report to Cabinet on the fire risk mitigation measures that have been introduced.

#### 2. Background Information

On 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020 Cabinet received a report on the outcome of the consultation on the proposed closure of seven, and the refurbishment of three, Direct Care homes for older people. These homes were as follows:

Proposed for closure:

- Ladycross House (Sandiacre)
- Beechcroft (West Hallam)
- East Clune (Clowne)
- Holmlea (Tibshelf)
- The Spinney (Brimington)
- Goyt Valley House (New Mills)
- Gernon Manor (Bakewell)

Proposed for refurbishment:

- Briar Close (Borrowash)
- Rowthorne (Swanwick)
- New Bassett House (Shirebrook)

Cabinet approved the following:

- Further to the consultation none of the homes proposed for closure will close unless a local care home or alternative provision is available to replace it, and further consultation is undertaken as appropriate.
- That a further report setting out a programme of repair and refurbishment for these seven homes, to include any works required

immediately to ensure their soundness and safety, will be presented to Cabinet in due course.

- That the plans to undertake a programme of work to refurbish New Bassett House, Briar Close and Rowthorne will continue with a further report presented to Cabinet seeking a business case and procurement approval in due course.
- That People Scrutiny Committee be invited to consider including within its work programme, oversight of the next steps (with particular reference to the need for and type of local provision required) to ensure transparency of decision making and to make any recommendations to Cabinet or elsewhere that may arise as a result of such scrutiny.
- That a revised strategy and investment plan taking into account reviews of the Market Position Statement and of the strategic needs analysis will be presented to Cabinet by the end of 2020.

The People Improvement and Scrutiny Committee at a meeting on 2 September agreed their approach to their role of overseeing the next steps in relation to Direct Care Homes for Older People, and identified the following key lines of enquiry.

1. How will the robustness and durability of ongoing mitigation measures be assessed?
2. How will demand for current and future provision for older people be assessed?
3. How will the market be assessed?
4. What factors will be considered when determining what is local provision?
5. How will factors that determine what is suitable alternative provision be identified and assessed?
6. How will stakeholders be engaged?

## **Information and Analysis**

The working group was mindful that property condition surveys conducted in 2019 reported that some of the Council's Homes for Older People were in poor condition and highlighted that 12 homes required rewiring. This included the 7 homes previously proposed for closure, the 3 homes proposed for refurbishment plus 2 homes (Ada Belfield, Belper and Hazelwood, Cotmanhay) where decisions have already been made to close once local alternatives have been established. Therefore, Members considered it a priority to ascertain the effectiveness and durability of the mitigation measures in place to address any increased risk associated with the need for properties to be rewired.

Members met with the Direct Care Group Manager on 25 August 2020 and was advised that a comprehensive risk evaluation had been undertaken to

establish whether the homes were safe and what mitigating actions were required.

The key elements of the risk evaluation were as follows:

- Technical Fire Risk Assessments (TFRA): these focus on the building related issues in respect of fire safety, they are undertaken by Property Services. They consider issues to do with the fire alarm system, fire doors, smoke detectors, emergency lighting and compartmentation. Once a TFRA is completed it provides a list of actions to address for each home.
- Operational Fire Risk Assessments (OFRA): these focus on the training and deployment of staff, arrangements for evacuation of the building, fire drills and use of equipment within homes. These are undertaken by the Unit Manager of the home.
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs): these are individual risk assessments and evacuation plans for each resident which are required to be reviewed regularly and updated by the unit manager as necessary (i.e. on first admission and on an ongoing basis as a person's needs change). The plan will describe how and with what equipment an evacuation will be affected for that individual from a compartment (a section of a building between fire doors which typically includes 4 or 5 bedrooms per compartment). Evacuation of an affected compartment must be completed within 2 ½ minutes as per Fire Service requirements.
- Electrical installation (hard wiring) safety testing: these focus on the safety of the electrical system and are commissioned by Property Services and are normally undertaken every 5 years but given the current circumstances will now be done every 2 years. For the 12 homes which require rewiring they were last undertaken in September 2018 and they will be repeated in September 2020. There is an action list for each home when non compliances are identified, and these are graded according to urgency and level of risk.
- Overall risk evaluation: the Council's Risk and Insurance Manager co-ordinated a comprehensive evaluation of all of the information contained in the above (at that time) for the 12 homes in October 2019. Officers from Property, Adult Care and Health and Safety were involved in this evaluation. This evaluation led to the decision that immediate evacuation of the homes was not required provided that the actions identified were address within the required timescales.

Members were advised that in addition to the above the Fire Service have been kept informed of the situation and advice has been sought and provided by them as appropriate.

The Direct Care Group Manager summarised the mitigating actions identified following the risk evaluation process, firstly from the TFRA's:

- Replacement of old fire alarm systems with modern addressable systems
- Replacement of non-compliant fire doors and repairs to existing fire doors
- Improved compartmentation where possible
- Improved emergency lighting
- Improved escape routes (clearing pathways from fire exits)

And secondly from the OFRA's:

- Refresher training for all managers and senior staff in fire safety management and evacuation techniques
- Fire safety refresher training for all staff working in all HOPs
- Monthly (at least) fire evacuation practice drills
- Updating of PEEPs for all residents
- Provision of improved evacuation equipment in line with PEEPs
- Deployment of additional night staff in order to ensure that the compartment with the highest need can be evacuated in 2 ½ minutes
- Suspension of long-term admissions to the 12 homes which need rewiring in order to assist in managing the risk

The Direct Care Group Manager went on to summarise the actions that had been taken so far and provided an update regarding future actions. He stated that:

- All of the actions associated with the OFRA's have been put in place and maintained and these are being monitored on a weekly basis. All of the 12 homes have confirmed that in the event of a fire the affected compartment could be evacuated within 2 ½ minutes, day or night.
- Delivery of the TFRA actions has been somewhat hampered by Covid-19 in terms of supply chain issues and restrictions on entering care homes. All of the new fire alarm systems have been installed, except for East Clune which will be completed by 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020. All of the fire door issues have been addressed apart from Rowthorne, the supply of these doors has been badly affected by the supplier not operating during the recent lockdown. A new supply arrangement is now being made and work should commence imminently. Work has been completed on ensuring pathways from escape routes are cleared. Some improvements to compartmentation remain to be completed at Goyt Valley House, Hazelwood and East Clune. We are advised that unfortunately the improvements to emergency lighting cannot be undertaken as this requires the homes to be rewired.

- Work associated with higher risk issues from the electrical safety testing have been addressed. We are advised that some lower priority issues can only be addressed when the homes are rewired.
- OFRA and TRFA actions continue to be monitored on a weekly basis and reported to the Adult Care Senior Management Team. Property are arranging for new TFRA's to be undertaken as all of the works listed above are completed in order to review previous actions and identify any new ones. As previously stated, the electrical installation testing will be repeated in September 2020 at all 12 HOPs. Once all of these elements are complete an overall risk evaluation exercise led by the Risk and Insurance Manager will be repeated to review the safety of each home and any high priority actions which need addressing. This will then be reported back to Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team.

Members welcomed the detailed briefing about the mitigation measures. However, they wished to explore further issues relating to the emergency lighting systems in some of the homes, following the statement that "improvements to emergency lighting cannot be undertaken as this requires the homes to be rewired". Therefore, a further working group meeting was held on 9 September with the Electrical Operations Manager and the Head of Projects (Design and Build) from Property Services, to consider in more depth the implications of buildings needing to be rewired. A fundamental question that Members sought an answer to was, Are the homes equipped with emergency lighting systems that would facilitate the safe evacuation of residents in the event of an emergency?

The officers present provided an update on the mitigating actions that have been undertaken and confirmed the following:

- The emergency lighting is operational and safe in all of the homes, although due to recent legislative changes it is not compliant to current standards.
- All homes have a compliant fire alarm system to current standards.
- Technical fire risk issues, such as damage to fire doors that occur over time due to wear and tear have been addressed. As new issues arise, they will be prioritised and added to the program of works.
- Property Services is working towards reissuing technical fire risk assessments for each home so that they are fully compliant from a fabric point of view, with no outstanding items listed on the program of works.
- To improve operational procedures in the event of an emergency evacuation the Adult Care Department requested additional compartmentation in some of the homes. So, although the buildings

were compliant with the building regulations, an enhanced compartmentation was required to aid operational issues.

- If work is undertaken to bring the emergency lighting systems up to date it will be necessary to disrupt the fabric of the building and therefore it makes good property management sense to see what other work could be carried out during the disruption. As previously stated, in all of the homes the fixed wiring is safe. However, in many, the wiring is reaching the end of its life and a full rewire may be required within the next two years. Comprehensive plans for rewiring, including details of the anticipated costs, have been prepared.

After having the opportunity to vigorously question officers from Adult Care and Property Services, Members of the working group agreed that they felt assured that the mitigation measures in place are sufficiently robust and durable to address the increased risk associated with the properties that have been identified as needing rewiring, in the near future. It was also agreed that the working group would continue to pursue the other key lines of enquiry regarding its role in overseeing the next steps in relation to direct care homes for older people. A briefing( on 25 August) from the Direct Care Group Manager about the proposed approach for identifying suitable and local provision, and a briefing (on 2 September) from the Service Director about the methodology to assess current and future demand for residential care and the preparation of a Market Position Statement have been received. The working group is now awaiting an update on the timeframe for this work and how it is progressing.

### **3. Officer's Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee

Agree that an interim report is submitted to Cabinet confirming that the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – People, is assured that the mitigation measures in place are sufficiently robust and durable to address the increased risk associated with the properties that have been identified as needing rewiring, in the near future

- (1) Note that the scrutiny working group will continue to pursue the other key lines of enquiry regarding its role in overseeing the next steps in relation to direct care homes for older people.

**Cllr Gary Musson**  
**Chairman of the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee - People**