

Policy Review and Development Panel

Rowan House, 33 Sheepen
Road, Colchester
20 November 2012 at 6.00pm

The Policy Review Panel deals with reviewing policies and issues at the request of the Cabinet or Portfolio Holder, or pro-actively identifying issues that may require review; dealing with those issues either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups, monitoring progress of these Groups and assessing their final reports.

Information for Members of the Public

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Terms of Reference

Policy Review and Development Panel

- To review strategies and policies at the request of the Cabinet either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups, and to make recommendations back to Cabinet for decision.
- To review issues at the request of a Portfolio Holder either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups and to make recommendations back to the Portfolio Holder for decision.
- To monitor progress of Task and Finish Groups and assess their final reports prior to their submission to either the Cabinet or the Portfolio Holder.
- To proactively identify issues that may require review and improvement and to seek Cabinet's agreement as to whether and how they should be examined.

**COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
20 November 2012 at 6:00pm**

Members

Chairman : Councillor Julie Young.
Deputy Chairman : Councillor Mark Cory.
Councillors Nigel Chapman, Mark Cable, Barrie Cook,
Margaret Fairley-Crowe and Jo Hayes.

Substitute Members : All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members or members of this Panel.

Agenda - Part A

(open to the public including the media)

Members of the public may wish to note that Agenda items 1 to 6 are normally brief and the last Agenda Item is a standard one for which there may be no business to consider.

Pages

1. Welcome and Announcements

(a) The Chairman to welcome members of the public and Councillors and to remind all speakers of the requirement for microphones to be used at all times.

(b) At the Chairman's discretion, to announce information on:

- action in the event of an emergency;
- mobile phones switched off or to silent;
- location of toilets;
- introduction of members of the meeting.

2. Substitutions

Members may arrange for a substitute councillor to attend a meeting on their behalf, subject to prior notice being given. The attendance of substitute councillors must be recorded.

3. Urgent Items

To announce any items not on the agenda which the Chairman has agreed to consider because they are urgent and to give reasons for the urgency.

4. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman to invite Councillors to declare individually any interests they may have in the items on the agenda. Councillors should consult Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 for full guidance on the registration and declaration of interests. However Councillors may wish to note the following:-

- Where a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest, other pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest in any business of the authority and he/she is present at a meeting of the authority at which the business is considered, the Councillor must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest, whether or not such interest is registered on his/her register of Interests or if he/she has made a pending notification.
- If a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at a meeting, he/she must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter at the meeting. The Councillor must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held unless he/she has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.
- Where a Councillor has another pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at a meeting and where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgment of the public interest, the Councillor must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held unless he/she has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.
- Failure to comply with the arrangements regarding disclosable pecuniary interests without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence, with a penalty of up to £5,000 and disqualification from office for up to 5 years.

5. Have Your Say!

(a) The Chairman to invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition at this meeting – either on an item on the agenda or on a general matter not on this agenda. You should indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.

(b) The Chairman to invite contributions from members of the public who wish to Have Your Say! on a general matter not on this agenda.

6. Equality and Diversity // Annual Update

See report by the Head of Life Opportunities

7. Older Persons Accommodation Task and Finish Group // Final Report

11 - 29

See report by the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration

8. Exclusion of the public

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).



Policy Review and Development Panel

Item
6

20 November 2012

Report of	Head of Life Opportunities	Author	Andrew Harley
Title	Equality and Diversity – Annual Update report		☎ 282880
Wards affected	All		

The Panel is asked to review this annual report on Equality and Diversity.

1. Decision Required

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to review progress made in meeting the Council's statutory duties and achieving its Equality and Diversity objectives, and also to endorse the approach set out at 10.2 below.

2. Reasons for Decision

- 2.1 The introduction of the Equality Act 2010 brought in a new Public Sector Equality Duty. This incorporates a general duty and specific duties, which includes a legal requirement for the Council to publish a range of information annually from January 2012, and also to publish its equality objectives by April 2012.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not applicable. It is important that the Panel has the opportunity to review the Council's progress in meeting its Equality and Diversity objectives. This assists the effective implementation of our policies, procedures and practices, and supports the discharge of our statutory duties. It also forms part of the information that helps us to evidence that we are meeting the general duty, which is then published on the Council's website.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 See Appendix A and B.

5. What have we achieved in 2012?

- 5.1 Since the last annual report, the Council has:
- met the new specific duties: publishing information and setting equality objectives
 - continued to address the general duty of "integrating consideration of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of public bodies, and across all its functions".
 - made clear in the Strategic Plan its commitment to creating better local communities with opportunities for all residents.

6. Equality Act – Specific Duties

- 6.1 The specific duties require public bodies to publish:
- information to demonstrate their compliance with the general duty, by 31 January 2012 and then at least annually, and
 - one or more specific, measurable equality objectives, by 6 April 2012 and then at least every four years.
- 6.2 The Council has met these new specific duties. The [equality information](#) was published in January 2012 on our website. The Council's [equality objectives](#) were included in our Strategic Plan 2012-15 which was agreed in February 2012 following consultation. Progress in achieving these objectives is monitored every six months and published in the Strategic Plan Action Plan.

7. Equality Act – General Duty

- 7.1 The general duty's aim is to integrate consideration of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of public bodies, and across all its functions. All councils, including their councillors and staff, must have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not
 - foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

The 'protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The duty also covers marriage and civil partnership, but not for all aspects of the duty.

8. National Policy and Developments

- 8.1 The period covered by this annual report is the first full year during which the general and specific duties have been in force. The Council needed to maintain a responsive and flexible approach during 2011/12 while it awaited the results of national consultation and policy developments, and the subsequent issuing of statutory or non-statutory guidance. These developments are continuing, especially around the future shape of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and its powers, but it is clear that a less prescriptive approach, within the context of a drive to reduce bureaucracy, is now reasonably settled public policy. Baroness Onora O'Neill is the new Chair of the EHRC.
- 8.2 The Government Equalities Office (GEO) has been working on "further reforms including: repealing unnecessary powers and duties; tighter financial controls; budget review; and new leadership". The aim is to move "away from regulation, legislation and coercion", and the GEO restated its priority as "concentrating its efforts on developing intelligent, light touch common sense policies". The GEO report can be viewed [here](#). In September, responsibility for equalities and the GEO moved from the Home Office to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in a government reshuffle.
- 8.3 The latest developments are that in October Maria Miller was appointed as the new Minister for Women and Equalities. In October, and that from 1 October the information, advice and support service which the EHRC had previously provided will now be run by a new Equality Advisory and Support Service ([EASS](#)) which the GEO has commissioned.

9. Meeting our Statutory Equality and Diversity Obligations

9.1 Beyond meeting the requirements as set out in the specific duties and general duty (paragraphs 6 and 7 above), it is left up to public bodies to decide how they will go about ensuring compliance. The following principles from case law, however, continue to apply.

To comply with the General Equality Duty, a public authority must ensure that:

- Staff and leadership are aware of the duty's requirements. Compliance involves 'a conscious approach and state of mind'. This means that decision-makers must be fully aware of the implications of the duty when making decisions about policies and practices.
- The duty is complied with before and at the time that a particular policy is under consideration and a decision is taken. A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- Consideration of the need to advance equality forms an integral part of the decision-making process. The duty must be exercised in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- Any third parties exercising public functions on its behalf are required to comply with the duty.
- Regard is given to the need to advance equality when a policy is implemented and reviewed.

9.2 We have used our best endeavours to keep informed and up-to-date with the changing policy picture at national level, and to interpret this into what we need to do and publish locally. We believe that this has enabled us to meet our obligations under the Act to date.

9.3 At an overall level, the evidence is published on the Council's website and includes:

- [Equality Impact Assessments](#)
- The Council's [Strategic Plan](#) and [Strategic Plan Action Plan](#)
- The Council's website pages on [Equality and Diversity](#)
- The Council's [equality information](#) section contains all required information
- Workforce statistics: [Equality monitoring information](#)
- Work undertaken by the Council's [Research and Engagement](#) team about service users, customers and the borough's population.
- The Council's independent, external accreditation as an '[achieving](#)' organisation under the Equality Framework for local government.

9.4 Please see Appendix A for more information and a summary of specific examples of what the Council has achieved over the last year.

10. Going Forward

10.1 Promoting tolerance and working with our partners and communities to meet the diverse needs across the borough is unlikely to be a priority that we could ever say is fully achieved. It is an aspiration that we have and are fully committed to but one we recognise takes both time and resources, and while we continue to improve and embed the approach into our day-to-day activities and decision-making, we also fully recognise that there is more to do.

10.2 Going forward we therefore propose to:

- Continue to gather evidence and assess our approach in meeting our statutory obligations.
- Encourage and support Council services in the delivery of the practical steps they are taking to improve accessibility to our services. The Universal Customer Contact Fundamental Service Review will embed a customer-centric approach that will have the different needs of our customers at its heart.
- Further develop the use and content of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs), especially with our politicians and scrutiny groups
- Make more systematic the use of the Council's surveys, consultations and equality monitoring data when equality impacts are being assessed by Services.
- Use the Council's Forward Plan to help allocate due priority to the key decisions listed there in order to better "integrate consideration of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of public bodies, and across all its functions".
- Develop internal learning and development tools, especially online and ask our Member Development Group to focus on how to help councillors develop their understanding and awareness of this important area of work.

11. Strategic Plan References

- 11.1 Since the last Annual Report on Equality and Diversity to this Panel, the Council has agreed a new Strategic Plan. The [Strategic Plan 2012-15](#) continues to reflect the importance of Equality and Diversity in our fast-growing borough.
- 11.2 The Strategic Plan's broad aims of leading to the future, creating opportunities for all residents, listening and responding, and its equality objectives, make a strong commitment to ensuring that all borough residents can expect a good quality of life, backed by a commitment to tackle discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

12. Consultation

- 12.1 Consultation took place prior to the agreeing and publishing of both the Equality objectives and the Strategic Plan 2012-15.

13. Publicity Considerations

- 13.1 The Council's approach to Equality and Diversity has the potential to affect everyone who lives, works or visits the borough. It can play a key role in the daily lives of individuals and communities by tackling prejudice, promoting understanding and advancing equality of opportunity.
- 13.2 The Equality Act asked all councils to provide a range of equality information by 31 January 2012, and then at least annually. The requirements are subject to change and development as specific guidance is issued to councils. We set up an [equality information](#) section on the Council's website to bring the required information together, along with other related content which may be of use or interest to customers, staff and councillors. This helps with openness and transparency, with everything 'in one place'.

14. Financial Implications

- 14.1 The past 12 months have continued to bring financial challenges and some difficult budget decisions. This situation is likely to continue over the next year, with new challenges such as the Welfare Reform changes from April 2013. The Council must ensure that it fulfils its obligations under the Equality Act and the duty must be exercised in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- 14.2 The Council's approach must continue to be proportionate, with key decisions being given due priority. Equality Impact Assessments must be an integral part of the decision-making process when addressing changes to policies and practices. This is especially the case in times of reduced resources with rising expectations and customer demand.
- 14.3 Please also see paragraph 17 below as by meeting its legal obligations, the Council will also help to avoid the potential for significant financial claims.

15. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

- 15.1 This report is an annual update about Equality and Diversity, and the Council's responsibilities in this area. Related information, including all Equality Impact Assessments, is published on the Council's website as at 6.2 and 13.2 above.

16. Community Safety and Health and Safety Implications

- 16.1 The Council's approach to Equality and Diversity involves working with partners and communities to foster good relations by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding. Such an approach impacts positively on crime and disorder, and community safety issues such as hate crime and the fear of crime more generally.
- 16.2 By meeting its legal obligations, the Council will help to ensure that employees do not suffer discrimination, harassment or victimisation. This will in turn create a safer working environment, and one which is consistent with the Council's Health and Safety policies.
- 16.3 The Council has important responsibilities for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. In September 2012, to reflect the high priority given to the Council's second Equality objective, 'protecting vulnerable groups', the Equality and Diversity Officer resource was combined with that of Safeguarding. The new post is Equality and Safeguarding Co-ordinator. The post-holder will continue to work closely with Colchester Borough Homes, its tenants and leaseholders.

17. Risk Management Implications

- 17.1 As an employer and provider of public services, the Council could face legal challenges from individuals or groups who have been unlawfully discriminated against, however unintended. Making sure that Equality Impact Assessments are prepared, published and considered as part of the decision-making process does reduce this risk significantly.
- 17.2 Legal cases brought on grounds of discrimination do not have upper financial limits like those brought through employment tribunals. The Council must meet its responsibilities to ensure it does not discriminate, and this will also help to avoid the potential for significant financial claims.
- 17.3 There are risks to the Council's reputation and profile if the organisation does not demonstrate that it has understood and met its responsibilities under the equalities legislation currently in place.

Improvements over the last year

Below lists some of the improvements we feel we have made over the last year, and Appendix B has a more detailed case study of one of these.

Our Customers

- Despite the tough economic climate and challenges the Council is facing with reduced grant income, it has continued to commit more than £200,000 of grant funding to voluntary welfare organisations such as Colchester Community Voluntary Services, Grassroots, Colchester and Tendring Women’s Refuge, Colchester Rural Age Concern, Colchester Citizens’ Advice Bureau and Age UK Colchester.
- Development gain monies, in the form of Community Section 106 funding, have been used to support local projects as well as those that provide borough-wide services. Examples include awards to The Samaritans, Outhouse East and The Salvation Army, and improved disabled access to community buildings and new community buildings.
- Each year we award approximately £600,000 of Disabled Facility Grants to people with disabilities to enable them to continue living independently in their own homes. These grants fund a mixture of works including the installation of stairlifts to the building of extensions.
- A commitment to the SOS Bus has been made with additional funding for its replacement and new equipment.
- Our Community Development Team continues to support specific client groups and activities which improve the life opportunities of residents, and our new Life Programme aims to support some of the most disadvantaged families in the borough.
- Our customer support team has provided awareness training to a number of external partners on welfare reform. This is to help get the message out to support agencies to best prepare for the impacts and how they can help their customers. We have raised awareness with partners who have customers with protected characteristics, such as:
 - Essex County Council – Parenting Platform – a meeting of agency partners concerned with parenting and family support. The practitioners in this group lead teams helping young families cope.
 - Phoenix Homes – addressed their AGM – they house vulnerable adults and run an alcohol project in Colchester.
 - Colchester Community Voluntary Service (CCVS) – wide network of support in Colchester borough.
 - Catch 22 – supporting young offenders and families.
- We have been working with a Muslim community leader in Colchester to raise awareness of Council services in the community. We also have contacts with the Colchester Nepalese Community and help to offer support to individuals whose first language is not English, in the CSC and by working with one of their community leaders.

- Our Welfare Reform Support Group has taken equality considerations into account as part of the challenge of implementing welfare reform. We have hosted a County-wide working group to assess the potential impacts of Localised Council Tax Support, and set up a cross-agency group to support customers directly impacted by the Benefits Cap.
- We set up a joint working protocol with Social Care so that all 16/17 years old at risk of homelessness are seen together by a social worker and housing officer. Consistent and local care of vulnerable young people is important so this, together with a specialist young person's case worker and specific accommodation, ensures we provide the best help we can.
- We are working with Walk Colchester project to provide all-terrain mobility scooter use at High Woods Country Park.
- We are working with Colchester Borough Homes on landscape adaptations at tenants' homes and sheltered accommodation to make gardens more accessible and to provide greater stimulus and enjoyment by enhanced landscape schemes.
- The Big Garden project works in partnership with North Essex Partnership Foundation Trust to deliver horticultural therapy and volunteering opportunities.
- We have secured funding for toilet refurbishment at Castle Park (Hollytrees) to improve visitor facilities including disabled access.
- Hilly Fields access path improvements are providing all-weather paths and all-weather access to everyone including those with mobility problems.
- New access improvements between New Braiswick Park residential development and the railway station provide a more direct route to facilities by people with a mobility impairment.
- Some of our most disadvantaged and elderly customers suffer from fuel poverty, and our Warm Homes Project participated in the Heatseeker initiative. This is a scheme that involves thermal imaging properties in the borough to identify those homes which are losing heat through the walls and the roof. Those residents are then offered help in accessing free or low-cost insulation to keep their homes warm and reduce their fuel costs. More than 1,000 measures have been installed as a result so far.
- Throughout the year the Museum Service meet with PORTAL on a monthly basis. A case study is attached at Appendix B which includes latest projects to aid people with a visual impairment.
- The Museum Service's 'Street Angels' project is the last part of a wider initiative known as 'Out in the Open'. The Museum Service has been running this since early 2011, and it is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. 'Street Angels' aims to give homeless people a voice, and help shape perceptions by showing the human stories behind the situations. The project has been undertaken in partnership with a number of community organisations including Beacon House, Cardinal Bourne Hall Drop-in Centre, Matrix, Colchester and Tendring Women's Refuge and Open Door.
- More "younger-people friendly" technology is being developed. The 'Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service' website is being developed to be 'mobile responsive'.
- The Museums Service has also been working for some time with the Dacon Trust which exists to help young adults with learning difficulties.

- Our Fundamental Service Reviews have approached future service delivery with diverse customer needs in mind. As an example, customers are able to use self-serve technology to link their Council Tax, Benefits and Housing information online. A number have fed back that this helps them greatly, as they have disabilities which prevent them attending Angel Court or they are working mothers/single parents who often lack the time to access Council services during working hours. We now have between 2,000 and 2,500 self-serve users and this is increasing steadily.
- Cabinet has agreed to enhance facilities in the Town Hall to improve access for people with a visual or hearing impairment.

Our Internal Policies and Communications

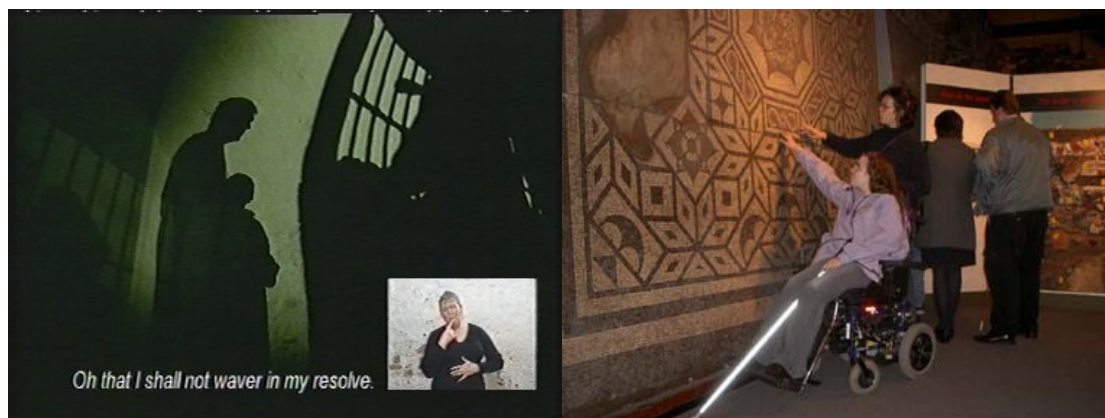
- All policies have an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), which is published on the website and all public reports contain consideration of the equality, diversity and human rights implications.
- All Council web pages and forms can now be translated free using the Google Translate feature, which provides a real benefit to people who do not have English as a first language. Please see [here](#) for an example of this translation option on one of our forms.
- We have continued to hold a number of officer and councillor Equality and Diversity communication groups throughout the year.
- We have continued to support and attend a number of local and regional groups linked to supporting customers and services that fall within the protected characteristic groups.
- New web-editor training is available for the testing of 'Plain English' on Council webpages.

Our Workforce

- Face-to-face induction training for all new staff has continued. The Council's Equality and Diversity induction course for new staff has also been published as an e-learning course on Vine East, our e-learning platform, which will help to ensure that employees are kept up to date with recent developments.
- Workforce Equality and Diversity data collection includes our annual review of performance ratings by grade and gender.
- There has been an extension of employee 'protected characteristic' profiled data to include formal grievance, harassment and dismissal cases. This will help the Council to ensure that it does not discriminate.
- Continuous review of our Human Resources Policies, including our flexible approach to working, approach to health and wellbeing, and treating each other with dignity and respect.
- 'Removing barriers to Council Services' Workshop was held in February 2012 – aimed at helping to develop more knowledge and awareness of the barriers our customers face, and to advance equality of opportunity for customers.

PORTAL – Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service Disability Access Advisory Group

A case study of the background, creation and success of working with an access consultation group as part of the Museums Service.



Background

Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service (CIMS) has established PORTAL as its Disability Access Advisory Group. This was achieved through the commitment to disability access of a group of staff that included the Museum Manager. This strong sense of identity with, and ownership of, the project at the highest level has been vital in maintaining PORTAL over the years, particularly in ring-fencing an access budget at times of reduced resources, and in championing the group with staff and stakeholders. Disability access is seen as a core activity and has been written into successive museum development plans.

PORTAL Mission Statement

Our purpose is to advise and work with Colchester Museums Service in order to provide equal access, in its broadest sense, for everyone, regardless of ability, to the monuments and collections in their care.

Our common aim is to promote greater use and enjoyment of the service, and to inspire a feeling of shared ownership in our heritage.

How the group works

The group's purpose is to ensure continuous improvement in terms of physical and intellectual access to the whole range of services which the museums offer. It also ensures that resources are used effectively.

Currently PORTAL is composed of seven people, with a range of disabilities. The intention is to extend the number to ten, and to include somebody with a learning disability and a mental health service user, so that the group can be representative of as broad a range of disabilities as possible. One member of PORTAL acts as Co-ordinator and works closely with the Museum's Access Officer. All PORTAL members are entitled to payment for their attendance as a reflection of the value that the museum places on their advice.

All new projects are assessed by PORTAL, and they review existing provision. PORTAL meets once a month with the agenda set by the Co-ordinator, Access Officer and Museum Management Team at quarterly meetings. Museum staff attend PORTAL meetings by invitation for specific agenda items. This bolsters the autonomy of the group, and allows time for more frank and open discussion without a museum presence if required. Individual members of PORTAL are also embedded in the museum teams for major projects.

Key benefits

The benefits for the museum are many, and include the following:

- The Museum receives practical opinions based on experience. This has included PORTAL members test-driving access options to see how they work in practice.
- PORTAL is a source of external opinion and advice, which adds weight when making a case for project funding or for a particular option.
- PORTAL members act as advocates for the museum.
- Museum staff meet with PORTAL members on a regular basis, and through this familiarity gain confidence and develop skills that serve them well with other disabled people.
- PORTAL members, for their part, increase their levels of knowledge and experience of the context in which the Museum operates and of disabilities other than their own.

Key outcomes

Consultation with the group has been key to developing and providing:

- Touch tours/handling sessions and other resources for visually impaired visitors
- Audio visuals with British Sign Language and subtitles and other resources for deaf/hearing impaired visitors
- Facilities and access improvements for people with mobility disabilities
- This year they have been instrumental in ensuring that the Colchester Castle project and other exhibitions and projects are accessible to disabled people.
- Use of the 'Pen Friend' has been introduced into the Castle and Ipswich Art School Gallery where it has been trialled by PORTAL. They are also currently helping to trial the use of a tactile guide to the Egyptian Gallery in Ipswich Museum. Both of these will help people with visual impairments have better access to our displays.

Conclusion

PORTAL has had a profound effect on the way people work and think. The museum service as a whole now incorporates access into all new projects, large or small. PORTAL is consulted from the beginning, and in so doing the whole process for accessibility becomes much easier and helps provide more inclusive provision for all visitors.



Policy Review and Development Panel

Item
7

20 November 2012

Report of	Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration	Author	Karen Paton 282275
Title	Recommendations from the Older Persons Task and Finish Group		
Wards affected	All Wards		

The Panel is invited to review the work undertaken by the Older Persons Accommodation Task and Finish group and to consider the recommendations of that group.

1. Action required

- 1.1 To consider the work undertaken by the Older Persons Accommodation Task and Finish, to consider the recommendations of that group and agree the next steps.

2 Reason for scrutiny

- 2.1 At the meeting on 8th November 2010 The Policy Review and Development Panel accepted the invitation of the Portfolio Holder for Housing to set up a Task and Finish Group:

“To undertake a comprehensive review of the issues relating to accommodation for older people in order to assist in the determination of a Strategy and action plan which will assist older people in Colchester find housing solutions which meet their needs”.

- 2.2 The Panel is now asked to consider the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

3 Background information

- 3.1 To fulfil its remit, it was anticipated that the Task and Finish Group would need to consider a number of particular topics:

- What do we know about need, demand and current provision and what are the gaps?
- What are the key national and local policy drivers?
- What do older people want and what do they think of current provision? What does the next generation of older people want? What should the Council’s key strategic objectives be for its strategy?
- What actions should be undertaken to meet these objectives?
- What resources are available?

- 3.2 The Task and Finish group undertook the following tasks to consider the topics outlined above:

- Assembled an evidence base of information to determine need, demand and current provision from research and information already available

(Housing Needs Register, Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Census data).

- Considered the national key policy drivers including *Lifetime Homes*, *Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society*, *Housing our ageing population- panel for innovation (HAPPI)*, *Breaking the Mould (re-visioning older people's housing)*, *The Living Well at Home Inquiry* and *Fairer care funding (The Dilnott report)*
- Considered the key strategic documents of other key organisations including *The Accommodation Strategy for Older People in Essex 2007-2009*, *Homes for Older People*
- Looked at existing consultation with older people undertaken locally
- Looked at the existing Housing Strategy for Colchester and considered relevant objectives and actions from that document and those identified by the group from the research undertaken

3.3 The Older Persons Accommodation Task and Finish Group also undertook visits to different types of accommodation which had been provided for older people. This included:

- Winnocks and Kendalls Almshouse provided by a voluntary group (rented accommodation)
- Meadow Park Retirement village (owner-occupied accommodation)
- Balcerne Gardens Trust (Privately owned Sheltered accommodation)
- Wenham View (Social rented/Shared Ownership Sheltered accommodation)
- Elfreda House and Walnut Tree House (Colchester Borough Council's Sheltered Accommodation)

A summary of these visits can be found in Appendix 2 of the strategy document

3.4 The group felt that the Council needed a strategy which would set out the Council's ambitions for meeting the housing needs of older people in Colchester over the next 5 years. The Strategy would be a key driver for close working with the Council's partners to ensure Colchester remains a place where older people flourish and can make an important contribution to the life of the borough.

The strategic priorities for the strategy are:

- To deliver a choice of good quality housing for older people in the borough.
- To enable older people to live independently in their own homes for longer.
- To make the best use of technology to enhance the quality of life for older people.
- To provide better access to information and housing advice for older people.

The Strategy is presented at Appendix 1 and reflects the work of the Task and Finish Group over the past year.

3.5 The Task and Finish Group undertook consultation on the Strategy (see 5.1 below)

3.6 The Policy Review and Development Panel are asked to consider the recommendations of the Task and Finish group and the Older Persons Accommodation strategy and to agree that the strategy be referred back to the Portfolio Holder for

Housing and Communities for a decision on the adoption of the Older Persons Accommodation Strategy.

4. Strategic Plan references

- 4.1 The work of the Older Persons Task and Finish Group links to the Strategic Plan Priority to deliver high quality accessible services by supporting more vulnerable groups

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation on the Older Persons Accommodation Strategy was carried out from 24th July 2012 until 7th September 2012. The strategy was put on the Council's website with a questionnaire for respondents to answer on the structure of the strategy as well as the content. The consultation was publicised to stakeholders in advance.

Responses to the consultation came from officers within the Council, a housing provider, a resident and a voluntary agency. Although there were not many responses they were positive and highlighted only a few amendments which were taken back to the task and finish group to agree.

6. Publicity considerations

- 6.1 If the Portfolio Holder for Housing agrees to the Older Persons Accommodation Strategy a full communications plan will be developed.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the work of the Task and Finish group. There are no direct financial implications from recommending that the strategy is considered by the Portfolio Holder for adoption. Any financial implications identified in the strategy would be considered on a project by project basis.

8. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for the strategy and is available on the Council's website [here](#)

9. Community Safety implications

- 9.1 The Older Person's Accommodation Strategy contributes to the Community Safety of Older People especially regarding Helpline services

10. Health and Safety implications

- 10.1 The Older Person's Accommodation Strategy contributes to the Health and Safety of Older people especially regarding Helpline Services.

11. Risk Management implications

- 11.1 There are no specific risk management implications

Colchester's Older Person's Accommodation Strategy

Introduction

The Older Person's Accommodation Strategy is the result of a comprehensive review into the issues relating to accommodation for older people in Colchester.

The review was undertaken by a Task and Finish Group which was made up of six Councillors and two Officers, set up by the Policy Review and Development Panel.

The aim of the Strategy and action plan is to assist Older People in Colchester to find Housing Solutions which meet their needs.

Consultation

In 2010 the Colchester Older People's Forum held an extra meeting organised by Care and Repair UK for forum members and other local organisations and service users to share ideas around 'Homes and Later Life in Colchester'.

Some of the Key Messages included;

- Support for measures to encourage and enable people to plan for future needs and try to prevent loss of independence
- Development of policy and practice that delivers accessible and inviting neighbourhoods, suitable for all
- Increased supply of housing that is well designed and offers more choice
- A service that offers a good quality and comprehensive service (regardless of a person's housing tenure)

Strategic Framework

Over the past few years there have been a number of National, Regional and local research studies into the needs and aspirations of our increasing ageing population. The following documents have been taken into consideration when developing this strategy.

Key National Drivers

In 2008 ***Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society*** identified that in today's society people are living longer and by 2026 older people will account for almost half of the increase in the total number of households. This poses one of the greatest housing challenges as most of our homes and communities today are not designed to meet the changing needs of people as they grow older. The strategy set out a response to this challenge by outlining plans for making sure that there is enough appropriate housing in the future to alleviate the

pressure on housing, health and social care, and to help people live more independently for longer. Although this strategy was archived in May 2011 following the election of a new government, the issues that it raised still remain relevant.

In December 2009 The Homes and Communities Agency commissioned the ***Housing our ageing population- panel for innovation (HAPPI)*** report on behalf of Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health to consider how best to address the challenge of providing homes that meet the needs and aspirations of older people in the future. The 'innovation panel' was set up to promote good ideas and advance existing good practice and by looking at the further reform needed to ensure that new build specialised housing meets the needs and aspirations of the older people in the future.

The work of the panel focussed on four main areas

- Improving the quality of life for our ageing population by influencing the availability and choice of good housing.
- Challenging the perceptions of housing for older people.
- Raising the aspirations of older people to demand higher quality, more sustainable homes.
- Spreading awareness of the possibilities that innovative design can offer.

The report sets out the findings in four main chapters. The final chapter makes detailed recommendations directed towards the government and key organisations.

In February 2011 a report was put together by the National Housing Federation to encourage Housing Associations to consider the future of housing, care and support for older people. ***Breaking the Mould (re-visioning older people's housing)*** recognised that the pace of change in demand and need constantly outstripped the changes in volume and design of housing and services. The report looked at four groups of older people and different ways in which housing providers could respond to their demands, these included;

- Older people in existing retirement housing – Only 5% of all people live in this type of housing - need more flexibility and choice within the stock.
- Older people in general needs housing – Over half of tenants over 65 live in this type of housing – are the older customer's needs being met by the housing service.
- Older people in the wider community – need help to live independently or to meet increasing care needs.
- A powerful generation of asset-rich, high-expectation 'baby boomers' who are approaching retirement and have different demands for housing in later life.

In the last year there have been two significant pieces of research undertaken that recognise the links between housing with care and support for Older People and the need for a joined up approach to services.

In July 2011 Jeremy Porteus edited the ***Living Well at Home*** Inquiry by the all Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People. The inquiry focused on Mainstream Housing and noted that a suitable place to live can mean;

- independence for longer
- prevent the need for residential care
- reduce requirements for care at home
- result in fewer accidents and hospital admissions
- allow people to leave hospital earlier with less risk of immediate re-admission.

The report considered the obstacles to obtaining assistance with basic home repairs, adaptations or domiciliary help and made recommendations of the changes needed to overcome these obstacles.

The findings of the report have been promoted to the government.

Also in July 2011, the Dilnott Report (named after the Chair of the Commission on funding of care and support) looked at the issues around the current system for funding care and support where people are currently unable to protect themselves against high care costs. ***Fairer care funding*** proposed a new system whereby;

- People can plan for the future instead of being fearful of the financial consequences of needing care
- People with a care and support need now are better supported

The report outlined a new model based on key findings and put forward recommendations.

Key findings

- The current adult social care system needs reforming as it is not fit for purpose.
- The current system is confusing, unfair and unsustainable.
- People are unable to protect themselves against very high care costs
- People want a fairer way of sharing costs and responsibility between the state and individuals.

The main recommendations

- Everyone that receives care free now will continue to do so, and a cap is proposed to protect everyone else from extreme costs
- Proposal of an increase in the threshold at which means-tested support is taken away

- Propose a shift to a new national eligibility threshold to tackle the extremes of a 'postcode lottery' and better assessment processes for those needing care and their carers

It is hoped that this set of proposals will concentrate help on those with the greatest needs, and create a new partnership between the public and private sectors.

Key Local Drivers

The ***Accommodation Strategy for Older People in Essex 2007-2009, Homes for Older People*** recognised that the aspirations of older people were changing and that the existing accommodation and care options available to them may no longer be suitable. Therefore, the aim of the strategy was to identify a range of Housing and Care options for older people. The strategy was developed with key housing and support partners to;

- Increase and improve the housing and care options for older people
- Improve the effectiveness of current housing, care and support options available for older people.
- Encourage and increase joined up working between housing, support and care partners

The challenge was to encourage the development of the best mix of accommodation options for older people to try and alleviate some of the pressure from Health and Social care as this was beginning to increase.

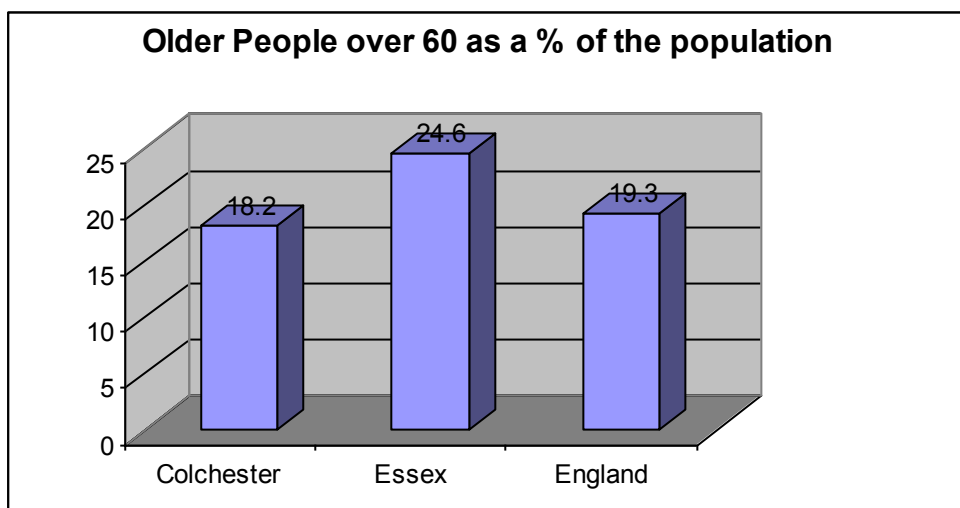
The strategy was aimed at commissioning partners and other stakeholders to help improve joint working.

An action plan was developed based on key recommendations to improve accommodation options for older people.

Evidence Base

Demographics and housing need

An estimated 32,200 people in Colchester were of retirement age (60+ for women, 65+ for men) in 2009 accounting for 18.2% of the population. This was considerably lower than the proportion of people of retirement age in Essex (24.6%) and slightly lower than the figure for the rest of England (19.3%). (Source; LIP)



Nationally, life expectancy has risen by five years since 1997. Life expectancy at age 65 is 17.4 years for men and 20.0 years for women. In Colchester, some 15% of the Borough's population is over 65 and more than 25% of households are headed by someone over 65. The numbers of people over 65 are likely to grow faster than any other household type over the next 30 years. See table below.

Population of Colchester aged 65 and over, in five year age bands, projected to 2025

	2008	2010	2015	2020	2025
People aged 65-69	7,200	7,900	10,000	8,500	9,100
People aged 70-74	6,100	6,400	7,500	9,500	8,200
People aged 75-79	5,000	5,100	5,900	6,900	8,800
People aged 80-84	3,800	3,900	4,300	5,100	6,000
People aged 85 and over	3,600	3,800	4,500	5,300	6,600
Total population 65 and over	25,700	27,100	32,200	35,300	38,700

*Figures may not sum due to rounding
Crown copyright 2008*

Notes

Figures are taken from Office for National Statistics (ONS) subnational population projections by sex and quinary age groups. The latest subnational population projections available for England are based on the 2006 mid year population estimates and project forward the population from 2006 to 2031. Long term population projections are an indication of the future trends in population by age and gender. The projections are derived from assumptions about births, deaths and migration based on trends over the last five years. The projections do not take into account any future policy changes.

Older person only households are more likely than non-older person households in the Colchester area to be living in 1 or 2 bedroom properties. About 60% of older households have no dependent children but occupy homes with a greater number of bedrooms than they need. 49.6% of all older person households are in 3 or 4 bedroom dwellings. (These are largely comprised of 1 or 2 persons).

Whilst the majority of large 3+ bedroom properties are in the owner-occupied sector there are an estimated 308 properties in the social rented sector. Around a quarter of family homes owned by Colchester Borough Council (CBC) are occupied by a single person. Some 68% of those over 65 owned their own homes in 2001, a figure set to rise to 75% by 2026. In every single age group over 55 years in Colchester home-owners far exceed every other tenure. See table below.

Proportion of population of Colchester aged 55 and over by tenure type

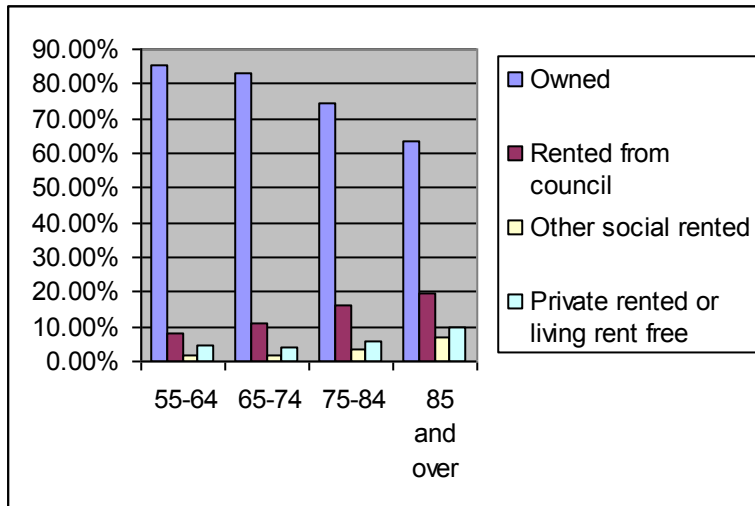
	People aged 55-64	People aged 65-74	People aged 75-84	People aged 85 and over
Owned	85.65%	83.04%	74.56%	63.35%
Rented from council	8.35%	10.82%	16.21%	19.67%
Other social rented	1.60%	1.96%	3.63%	7.07%
Private rented or living rent free	4.40%	4.18%	5.60%	9.91%

Figures may not sum due to rounding

Crown copyright 2008

Notes

Figures are taken from Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2001 Census, Standard Tables, Table S017 Tenure and age by general health and limiting long-term illness. The terms used to describe tenure are defined as: Owned: either owned outright, owned with a mortgage or loan, or paying part rent and part mortgage (shared ownership). Other social rented: includes rented from Registered Social Landlord, Housing association, Housing Co-operative and Charitable Trust. Private rented: renting from a private landlord or letting agency, employer of a household member, or relative or friend of a household member or other person. Living rent free: could include households that are living in accommodation other than private rented. Figures in this table have not been projected forward as the figures would not be reliable.



Demand

In Colchester Borough 7.9% of older person only households expect to move compared with 19% of all households in the borough. (7.9% represents 1,335)

Generally older persons moving households are looking for smaller accommodation with 69% wanting a 1 or 2 bedroom home. Currently a significantly lower proportion lives in 1 or 2 bedroom homes – 53.1%. This suggests that there is some desire for older persons to downsize.

The main reason for older persons expressing a requirement to move is to be closer to family and friends followed by the home being too big and access problems. Therefore location of properties and size/design are important factors for housing.

Around 60% would like or expect to remain living in the borough whilst many would like (33.8%) or expect (35%) to move to or remain in affordable housing. Out of all social rented accommodation 36.6% contains older people only, which may have implications for future supply of specialised social rented accommodation.

(Currently only 22.3% of the moving older person group live in affordable housing).

Bungalows are a popular choice for older person households as 36.9% want to move to a bungalow and 23.9% would like to move to some sort of specialist housing, mainly sheltered accommodation.

As at 31st March 2012 there were 539 people on the Councils housing register who are suitable for sheltered housing, whether or not they have expressed a preference for this type of housing. It should be noted that this is no indication of their housing preference and many may prefer not to live in sheltered housing. The largest number of applicants (some 40%) are registered in Band E (see table below) These applicants have been assessed as being

housed in homes that meet their needs and have little or no chance of being re-housed. The oldest applicant is 99 years old and the youngest is 46 years old. The oldest application has been active since 1970.

Applicants on Colchester’s Housing Register suitable for sheltered housing

Band	Number of Applicants	% who are Social Housing Tenants
A	58	100%
B	88	72%
C	154	42%
D	18	50%
E	213	27%
F	8	63%
Total	539	

Source: Abritas CBL information system, March 2012.

Sources used Local Investment Plan (Draft document 2010), Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008, Office for National Statistics – 2001 Census.

Strategic Priorities

The Task and Finish group identified 4 key strategic priorities to improve the quantity and quality of housing and related services for older people in the borough.

To deliver a choice of good quality housing for older people in the borough

Research has shown that the aspirations of our ageing population require a wider choice in the type of housing that is available.

A key message that came out of the consultation organised by the Older People’s forum was that the housing needs of older people are diverse and cover a wide range of circumstances, often unplanned, and therefore housing options for this group also need to be varied.

The Task and Finish group identified a wide range of Sheltered Housing accommodation in the borough for older people but recognised the need for alternative accommodation including mainstream housing options. The group also identified the need for more specialist housing especially Extra-care accommodation that is wheelchair accessible and housing for people with

Dementia.

The group visited sheltered schemes in neighbouring boroughs that offered mixed tenure choices. By offering this type of scheme in Colchester it would help to provide more balanced communities by attracting new residents who wish to retain a property interest and provide alternative accommodation for those in the social rented sector.

New housing for older people should be part of mixed communities and be developed in sustainable locations, close to shops and facilities and take account of the impact on the health and social care services in the area.

The evidence base suggests that in Colchester older people have the desire to downsize especially to move nearer to family or friends or where their home has become too big and there are access problems.

It is important to encourage under occupiers to downsize by providing the right type of housing options as it can free up family homes in need to make best use of the housing stock.

The Council has recently conducted a review of its sheltered accommodation in Colchester. The review was undertaken to assess how the current accommodation could be improved in order to provide the best type of accommodation to meet the needs and aspirations of older people in the borough.

To enable older people to live independently in their own homes for longer

It is important that all new homes built specifically for older people should meet the lifetime homes standard. The standard includes wider doorways to enable wheelchair access, kitchen and bathroom layouts to suit those with limited mobility, level access showers and other design features that make adaptation easier. These standards will help older people to remain in their own home for longer.

With the predicted increase in the ageing population the demand for Disabled Facilities Grants in the borough is also likely to increase. These means-tested mandatory grants are payable to older and disabled people to fund essential adaptations to their homes and are on the recommendation of Occupational Therapists. This will pose a challenge in order to meet the increase in demand on limited resources.

Essex County Council has recently been reviewing ways to help streamline the administration of the service in order to make it more efficient and effective for older people.

The Home Improvement Agency services in Colchester are now provided by Swan Care and Repair, a not for profit organisation that have been awarded

the new contract from Supporting People. Swan assist clients with many services designed to ensure they are able to remain in their own homes, safe and independently.

In summary, the services offered are

- undertaking adaptations and repairs to the home
- assisting clients with applying for grants or loans to fund eligible works that are required
- helping clients to find an approved contractor from a database
- supervising any works and keeping clients up to date with progress
- providing support and advise throughout the process

Swan Care and Repair also provide a Home from Hospital Service in conjunction with NHS North East Essex Primary Care Trust and Dengie Project Trust. The service helps people to live independently after being discharged from hospital, offering support after returning home and providing a service to meet the client's needs. The Aids and Adaptations service includes installing key safes and grab rails to assist clients in the home and free home safety checks can also be arranged.

A Handyperson and Gardening service are also provided by Swan along with free information, advice and guidance on a range of housing related queries including benefits advice, information on other housing options and help with referrals to Warm Front which can assist with new installations of both gas and oil heating systems and replacing old boilers.

As shown in the evidence base, the ONS estimated that by 2026 the number of homeowners in Colchester over the age of 65 will rise to 75%. Many home owners are likely to belong to the 'asset rich cash poor' generation without a mortgage but with low pension incomes and therefore unable to afford the cost of repairing and maintaining their properties. In this situation equity loans could offer an opportunity for older people to access finance to help with the cost of home improvements.

To make the best use of technology to enhance the quality of life for older people

Telecare is a communication system which enables older people to remain independent in their own homes by providing an immediate response service to support the individual or their carers. Immediate contact with a local monitoring centre via a 24 hour telephone link, provides security and helps older people to manage the risks of living alone.

Telecare can be tailored to the individuals needs and has been especially effective in providing older people with Dementia enhanced independence in their own home. This is due to the additional sensors that can be added to an existing Telecare system such as fall detectors and movement sensors.

Get Digital, a scheme funded by the government in 2010-2011, was designed to help older people gain digital skills and use the internet. The scheme was recognition of the importance of enabling older people to access the internet. This helps support older peoples independence by providing access to information that can help them make informed choices. It is important that new housing schemes for older people provide IT facilities with internet access for residents.

To provide better access to information and housing advice for older people

The Council operates a choice-based lettings scheme (CBL) to give housing register applicants the opportunity to choose the properties they would like to be considered for by bidding. A recent customer service survey showed that older people found the CBL system more difficult to access than younger people and therefore may need advice and support to enable them to bid.

The Task and Finish group identified the need to provide information about housing and support services to older people in Colchester to help them make informed choices. The group identified that this information was available through the Elderly Accommodation Council website and that it needed to be more readily available to older people in the borough.

Housing advice also needs to be targeted to the most vulnerable older people through partnership working with organisations including Age UK and Health Visitors.

Personalisation is the process in which local authorities (Essex County Council) deliver adult social care, by providing tailored services to meet the specific needs of a person through individual budgets. The expectation is that housing providers will support the needs of individuals in different housing settings. The exception to this for older people is Extra – Care housing as residents moving into the scheme will be expected to accept the care and support provided by the on site care provider. It is important for housing providers to have an understanding of the impact of personalisation.

Conclusion and monitoring

The Older Persons accommodation strategy aims to set out the way in which Colchester Borough Council will meet the needs of the growing Older People population in the borough and measure how it will achieve positive outcomes.

In order to ensure that the strategy will meet the key objectives and outcomes it will be monitored regularly.

Appendix 1

Actions to meet Strategic Priorities for Accommodation Strategy for Older People

These actions have been identified to improve the quantity and quality of housing and related services for older people in the borough.

1. To deliver a choice of good quality housing for older people in the borough

Action: To ensure a range of Housing options are provided for older people including Sheltered, Extra-care, Private rented and Leasing Schemes

Action: To consult with applicants in the 40 to 50 year age group on the Housing Needs register to find out what housing aspirations they have for the future

Action: To develop ways to encourage under occupiers to downsize to smaller accommodation

Action: To improve existing sheltered housing schemes – *already being undertaken through the sheltered housing review*

Action: To explore options to increase tenure choices for older people – schemes where there are both social housing units and private sale units

Action: To deliver new housing for older people that is designed to meet future needs and aspirations – lifetime homes

2. To enable older people to live independently in their own homes for longer

Action: To streamline the Disabled Facilities Grant process to enable a more efficient and effective service for older people (*this may have already been progressed*)

Action: To investigate the service provided by the Home Improvement Agency in Colchester including the handyperson scheme and promote the service to residents

Action: To provide advice and information about equity release schemes for home owners to enable them to release money for home improvements including co-operatives

Action: to produce an updated register of social rented properties with adaptations in Colchester to enable best use of housing stock when the property becomes available

3. To make the best use of technology to enhance the quality of life for older people

Action: To promote the Council's Helpline monitoring and response service that can provide effective support to older people including Telehealth services (working with the NHS commissioned by ACE).

Action: To improve access to the internet for older people living in sheltered housing

4. To provide better access to information and housing advice for older people

Action: To monitor participation of the Homechoice system to ensure that older people are able to access the system in order to bid for properties (the customer service survey for CBL showed that older people found the system more difficult to access than younger people)

Action: To provide information about housing and support services for older people to help them make informed choices - raising the profile of www.housingcare.org

Action: To ensure that housing advice is targeted to the most vulnerable older people through partnership working with organisations like Age Concern, Health Visitors etc

Action: To have a greater understanding of the impact of personalisation on housing and housing services

Appendix 2

Summary of visits to Accommodation for Older People

Balkerne Gardens

The scheme is situated in close proximity to Colchester Town centre and provides sheltered accommodation for older people currently with the average age of 86 years. The original building dates back to 1833 and is grade 2 listed.

The scheme has 69 units of accommodation with 20 of these being bedsits. There is also a residential home on the site providing 40 bed spaces. The flats offer good sized comfortable accommodation

There are currently 250 people on the schemes waiting list and priority is based on need. Referrals must be over 65 and have a Colchester postcode. Referrals are taken from owner occupiers as well as people that are in rented accommodation. Currently the make up of the scheme is 60% private and 40% people receiving housing benefit.

There is 24 hour support on site. The popularity for the scheme is based on support being available as well as atmosphere, location and accessibility to amenities.

Winnock and Kendalls Almshouses

The almshouses are situated in Military Road where there are 2 sites of accommodation. On the east side is Kendall Terrace comprising of 16 dwellings which are Grade II listed buildings and on the west side is the Winnocks Terrace comprising of 25 dwellings, 6 of which are Grade 1 listed buildings.

The almshouses provide rented sheltered accommodation for older people over 60 and some younger with disabilities. There is no support on site but there are community alarms providing careline/telecare support. Some of the properties on the Kendall terrace have been refurbished from the original bedsit accommodation to one bedroom flats.

The scheme accepts direct referrals. Only 4 properties became available in 2011

Wenham View – Capel St Mary

This is a new sheltered scheme managed by Orwell Housing Association. The scheme offers social rented and shared ownership accommodation with support for older people. There are 32, 2 bedroom flats and bungalows in total.

The support at the scheme is provided by non-resident management staff and community alarm and the whole site is wheelchair accessible and offers assisted bathing facility.

Although the scheme is not near local amenities, mobility scooters can be hired and there is a large range of facilities on site including – restaurant/cafe, laundry, hairdressing salon, lounge and garden.

Meadow Park Retirement Village, Braintree

The scheme is managed by Peverel Retirement and comprises of 54 one and two bedroom apartments, two bedroom cottages and bungalows.

The scheme provides housing with support for older people over 55 and the

average age for the scheme is currently 65-70 years. The housing management support is provided by non-resident part time management staff and a community alarm service as well as individual care packages.

A service charge is also paid by each resident and is used to;

- Maintain grounds
- Maintain Communal areas
- Cover buildings insurance
- Provide transport for the residents via a regular bus service

The service charge continues to be owed even if the resident should die, until the property is sold.

Facilities include lounge, dining room, guest facilities and garden.

The accommodation is all leasehold.

Colchester Council Sheltered Accommodation

Elfreda House – Shrub End

The scheme is managed by Colchester Borough Homes and comprises 31 bedsit flats with shared bathrooms on each floor.

The scheme provides Sheltered Housing with support for older people over 55. The support is provided by non-resident management staff and a community alarm service.

The scheme is within easy reach of local amenities and facilities provided at the scheme include lift, lounge, laundry and garden.

The accommodation and facilities at the scheme are very dated and in need of refurbishment therefore the scheme is 'hard to let' and often with long standing voids.

Unfortunately the scheme has a miserable tired feel to it.

Walnut Tree House – Shrub End

This sheltered scheme is also managed by Colchester Borough Homes and comprises of 19 one and two bedroom flats. In contrast to Elfreda House which is in the same area, the scheme was renovated in 2006 and all the flats are to mobility and wheelchair standard.

The scheme provides Sheltered Housing with support for older people over 55. The support is provided by non-resident management staff and a community alarm service.

The scheme is also within easy reach of local amenities and facilities provided at the scheme include Lift, lounge, laundry, guest facilities, garden and conservatory. Additionally regular social activities include coffee mornings, trips out and lunches.

The scheme has a light airy feel to it and is a popular choice with applicants on the Housing Register now that it has been updated.

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