RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the outcome of the consultation with residents and the preferred option (as set out below) are noted:
   - a scheme based warden service is re-introduced for all sheltered housing schemes, from 8am to 4pm each week day
   - a dedicated handyperson service is introduced to carry out minor repair jobs
   - a night time security visiting service is introduced to improve security at the sheltered housing schemes.

2. That approval is given for the service to be funded through the introduction of a service charge. Reflecting an enhanced housing management model which will be eligible for housing benefit.

3. That no existing tenants are to be affected by the introduction of the service charge. The majority of prospective tenants will be entitled to housing benefit that will cover the service charge in the future.

4. That current residents who are not in receipt of housing benefit have their service charge paid through a transitional protection scheme. Transitional protection will apply to all qualifying tenants for the lifetime of their tenancy.

5. That approval is given for these charges to be introduced from 1 April 2013.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6. Two reports have been to Cabinet in January and October 2012 setting out proposals to introduce an enhanced housing management service which allows the Council to deliver savings from the Supporting People budget through a remodeling of the service; and securing alternative funding through service charges for an enhanced housing management service. The service will allow a warden in each scheme to be re-introduced to provide an on site, enhanced housing management service, Monday to Friday. This new service will continue to support older people to have a wide range of choice in their housing options and
will have an important role to play in keeping Southwark’s older people healthy, safe, well and living in their own homes for as long as possible.

7. The vast majority of residents are eligible for housing benefit and the warden service charge will be paid for in full through their housing benefit. Current residents who do not receive housing benefit will have the service paid for by the council, for the duration of their lifetime in the sheltered housing. The sheltered housing service is currently funded through the council’s supporting people programme.

8. Consultation has taken place with the residents at each of the sheltered schemes and stakeholders representing older people have also been consulted both individually and through the Older People Partnership Board. Every scheme has supported option 3 (the enhanced model (resident warden) based on an on site warden available Monday to Friday) as their preferred option. Resident feedback also supported the introduction of a dedicated handy person repairs and visiting night time security service to promote greater security at the schemes outside of day time working hours and this has been included in the preferred option.

9. The final proposals have also been considered at Area Forums and Tenants Council throughout November 2012 and the outcome of the sheltered residents’ consultation was noted and agreed.

10. On 23 October 2012 Cabinet agreed that authority be delegated to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing, in consultation with the cabinet member for health and adult social care, to consider the outcome of consultation and decide which of the alternative options should be provided.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

11. There are 20 sheltered housing schemes with 628 units of accommodation for elderly tenants in Southwark. Presently Adult Social Care provides funding at £802k per year for a visiting warden support service. From the 31 March 2013 this will cease.

12. This current warden service provides support during normal working hours on a hub and spoke model. Small teams of 3-4 officers are largely based in 4 hub schemes and provide visiting support to the more vulnerable tenants located in nearby schemes. Out of hours support is provided by the Southwark Monitoring and Alarm Response Team (SMART) through a warden call system.

13. In January 2012 Cabinet agreed to consult tenants on the proposal to introduce a service charge for the sheltered housing service that could fund an enhanced housing management model that would replace the existing service described above. Tenants were consulted on the following three options available for future provision of a service for sheltered tenants.

- Option 1 – Restructure of current service model (service hubs call out and warden visiting service). This would involve a landlord service charge to tenants of £21.91 p/w.
• Option 2 – Reduced service model (call out) based on a call out emergency response service only. This would involve a basic service charge to tenants of £6.68 p/w.

• Option 3 – Enhanced service model (resident warden) based on an on site warden available Monday to Friday from 8am to 4 pm each day. This would involve a landlord service charge to tenants of £32.70 p/w. (increased to £36.48 after including a handyperson service and visiting security service in the evenings).

14. The new enhanced housing management model would include tasks such as security, dealing with anti social behaviour issues, monitoring visitors to the schemes, managing CCTV, dealing with the general upkeep of the schemes and the reporting aid pre and post inspection of individual and communal repairs. They will also direct any repairs carried out by the handypersons service.

15. The enhanced housing management model will result in a re-orientation of the existing model of service delivery, from a support service to an enhanced housing management service, funded through a housing benefit eligible service charge.

16. A number of boroughs have successfully changed their service to the enhanced housing management model, based on a housing benefit eligible service charge, including Hammersmith and Fulham and Bromley. Other boroughs currently considering this option are Greenwich, Lewisham and Lambeth. It should also be noted that from April 2012 some RSL sheltered housing providers in Southwark introduced an enhanced housing management model in response to the withdrawal of Supporting People funding.

17. The dedicated handy person service will carry out minor repairs and small jobs such as:

- carpentry: repairs to internal doors, kitchen cupboards and worktops.
- minor disabled adaptations: including fitting rails and shower seats.
- falls prevention: carpet strips, removing carpets, changing light bulbs and curtains
- minor electrical repairs and plumbing: changing switches, taps, bulb holders and security lights.
- security: locks on windows and doors as well as replace/repair key safes decoration of communal areas.

18. It is proposed that a visiting night security team will check each scheme on a rota basis nightly and respond to specific incidents if and when they occur. This would be an additional service and would involve the creation of two new security officer posts within the Southwark Mobile Alarm Response team. The council’s preferred option at £36.48 per week involves a proposed new staffing structure for the sheltered housing service, as set out in the report to Cabinet of 23 October 2012. This proposed staffing structure will be subject to full consultation with affected staff and trade unions and will be conducted in line with the Council’s Reorganisation, Redeployment and Redundancy Procedure and will be the subject of a separate report.
19. On 24 January 2012 Cabinet agreed that new arrangements would be put in place from 1 April 2013. Subsequently, on 23 October 2012, Cabinet was updated on the review of alternatives for the new arrangements. The decision of the October Cabinet was to delegate authority to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing management (in consultation with the cabinet member for health and adult social care) to consider the outcome of consultation with Area Forums and Tenant Council and take a decision on which of the three proposals in the report were to be implemented. The recommendations of the October cabinet included that 'it be noted that it is proposed that these changes are introduced from January'. This proposal has proved impossible to implement for several reasons, chiefly:

a) consultation with Area Forums and Tenant Council could not start until after the call in period for the 23 October decisions had expired and was not therefore concluded until early December, the IDM decision had to be made in light of the results of the consultation.

b) to implement the service charge regime, 28 day notices must be issued to the 600 plus tenants.

c) a service charge reflects the cost of the service being delivered; the review and recommendations will result in the recruitment of new staff that cannot start until after the IDM decision has been made.

20. The proposals set out also help to support the partnership work that the council has been undertaking with the London Fire Brigade to promote fire safety, and fire safety risk assessment work, which recommends that an improved on site presence is necessary to most effectively promote safety and mitigate risks. The London Fire Brigade has also been fully briefed on the contents of the reports and proposals.

21. The authority has been agreed at cabinet and delegated to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing in consultation. Therefore a copy of this report has been sent to the executive member for health and social care for further comments and no further views have been expressed.

Consultation

22. The outcome of the resident consultation is set out in Appendix 1. A majority of residents strongly supported the re-introduction of a site based day time warden service, together with a dedicated handyperson service and visiting night security.

23. Further consultation has been undertaken with tenants’ council and area forums during November 2012. The outcome of the consultation at the Tenants Council AGM 26 November 2012 was to carry the decision unanimously and these decisions are detailed in appendix 2 and 3.
Community impact statement

24. The eight strands of council’s equality agenda have been considered to assess any potential impact. These eight strands are age, disability, faith/religion, gender, race and ethnicity, marital status, gender identify and sexual orientation.

25. It has been assessed that there are no significant detrimental impacts from the proposals which are set out in this report.

26. No existing tenants will be affected by the introduction of the charge and it is estimated that only a small percentage of new tenants would not be eligible for housing benefit to cover the cost of the new charge in future. For the small number of new potential tenants that are likely to have to pay the charge in future, advice will be provided in relation to income maximisation as well as other housing options available.

Resource implications

27. This report outlines the recent review of sheltered housing and the consultation process with residents. The proposal is to introduce an enhanced housing management service charge which will be accounted for within the housing revenue account.

28. The preferred option results in a cost of £36.48 per week per tenant for all tenants within the 20 schemes. This is outlined in the recommendations above. Funding will cover the cost of new management structure for the 628 units within the sheltered housing schemes across the borough.

29. Presently 83% of tenants are in receipt of housing benefit and the cost of the service charge is eligible under government guidelines. 17% of tenants are not eligible and by agreement will be transitionally protected.

30. The council has made a commitment to ensure that there is transitional protection for existing tenants not entitled to housing benefit. The transitional protection is expected to cost £158,782 in the first full year and available to non eligible tenants for the life of their tenancy.

31. All tenants will receive a letter confirming the new service charge with a commencement date of the 1 April 2013.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal Services

32. This report recommends that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for housing management approves the re-introduction of a scheme based warden service, the introduction of a dedicated handyperson service and night time security visiting service; that the changes are funded through the introduction of a service charge; that current residents who are not in receipt of full housing benefit have their service charge paid through a transitional protection scheme, funded through
savings on Supporting People budgets and that the proposed changes are introduced from 1 April 2013.

33. The council may provide the proposed services under general powers of management relating to housing accommodation conferred by section 21 of the Housing Act 1985 and the power to provide services for promoting the welfare of persons for whom accommodation is provided conferred by section 11A of the same act. The Housing Act also confers powers for the council to make reasonable charges for the proposed services under sections 11A and 24.

34. To conform with legal requirements relating to consultation, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for housing management must consider the outcome of all the consultation when making the final decision on the proposal. Consultation has been carried with tenants likely to be affected by the proposals and the outcome of that consultation is set out in Appendix 1. Further consultation with Area Forums and the Tenants Council has also taken place, in line with the consultation arrangements agreed by cabinet in January 2012 and the requirement of the council’s conditions of tenancy to consult with the Tenant Council before seeking to vary rents and other charges. The outcome of this is set out in Appendices 2 & 3.

35. The decision maker is also required to have due regard to the public sector equality duty (PSED) in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This duty requires the council to consider all individuals when carrying out its functions. Specifically, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those who do not. The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. The PSED also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in relation to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct. The report confirms that an equality impact assessment has been carried out and the community impact statement summarises the outcome. It is noted that a copy of the equality impact assessment is contained in the background papers attached to this report.

36. As to the proposed introduction of a service charge, the law requires that tenants be notified by service of a notice at least 28 days before it takes effect. The proposed implementation in April 2013 will depend on consultation and final decision taking processes being completed in sufficient time to comply with this requirement.

37. It is noted that the proposed new staffing structure for the sheltered housing service will be the subject of a separate report. As to the impact of the proposals on council employees working in the relevant housing service, it is also noted that consultation will be carried out with staff and the trade unions. Managers must ensure that this consultation is carried out before the proposed structure is implemented and in a manner fully compliant with the council’s re-organisation, redeployment and redundancy procedure.
38. The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for housing management, authority to make a decision on the proposals in this report pursuant to Part 3 of the council’s constitution that enables the Leader to delegate executive decisions to individuals.

**Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services (SDFCS) (NR/F&R/16/7/12)**

39. This report recommends that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for housing management approves the re-introduction of a scheme based warden service, the introduction of a dedicated handyperson and night time security visiting service, that the changes are funded through the introduction of a service charge, current residents who are not in receipt of full housing benefit have their service charge paid through a transitional protection scheme and that the proposed changes are introduced from 1 April 2013.

40. The strategic director notes the resource implications contained within the report and is mindful of the risks associated with housing benefit legislation changes in the future forcing additional unanticipated costs and the recoverability of service charges. Should this happen, alternative actions would be taken. Officer time to effect the recommendations will be contained within existing budgeted revenue resources.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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<th>Background Papers</th>
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<td>Martin Green, Head of Specialist Housing Service Tel: 0207 525 1418</td>
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<td>Staff structure</td>
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<td>Sheltered Housing Remodeling - cabinet report and Minutes (23 October 2012)</td>
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# AUDIT TRAIL

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